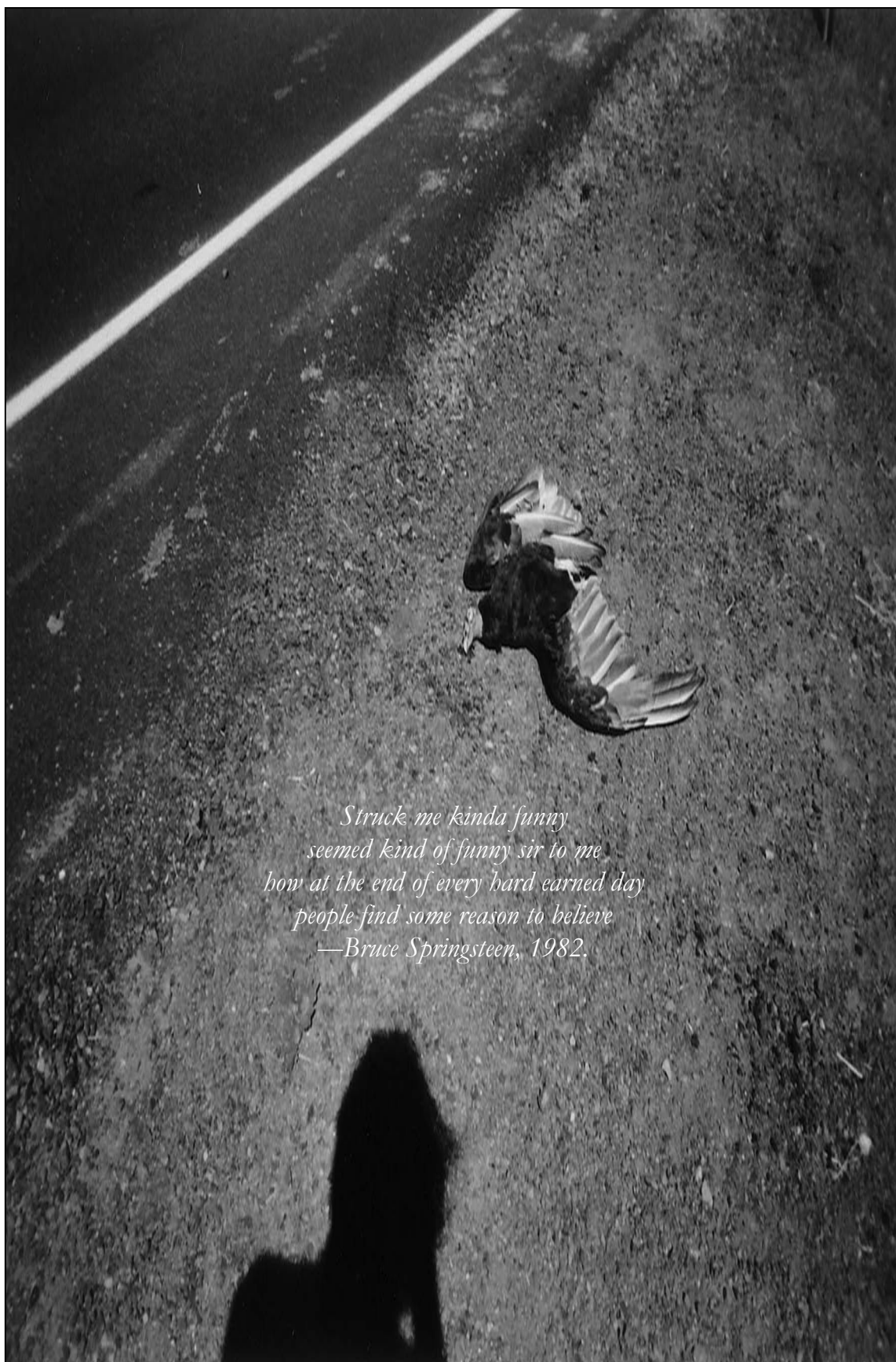


The Cenacle

Number 59 • October 2006



*Struck me kinda funny
seemed kind of funny sir to me
how at the end of every hard earned day
people find some reason to believe
—Bruce Springsteen, 1982.*

From Soulard's Notebooks

October 31, 2006
7:04 p.m.
Bauhaus - ^{inezzanne} left from table
Seattle, WA.

Dear Jim,
Too long since my last letter to you, the electronic kind don't count nearly as much, pen to paper is truest, & this one begins on the evening of a holiday most know for costumes & candy, while a few see its deeper more obscure aspect, & a week til the US Congressional elections, what will happen? "What will happen?" everyone wants to know - & the Resistance flexes new power & covers like old tin turtles, will voting machines be hacked? Will enough of us turn out to overwhelm the fascist Bush cabal's last stand? What will happen?

My audio workday companion Air America Radio is full of jittery, hopeful voices, all manner of experts & pundits & scholars & politicians & journalists saying yes there is hope, but - your vote will likely be counted but - the six-year nightmare seems to be ending but - nobody knows absolutely for sure - not for a week if then -

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What I suspect is that people are tired of politics, & soul-exhausted of war. Those governing on a ~~politic~~ platform of perpetual fear - an ideology of xenophobia - a faith that the spectre of terrorism is enough to keep the masses cowed & silent - it's not working - it's long ago not been working -

Civilized societies sooner or later will to return to civility, both domestically & in relations with their neighbors. For all of the Bush cabal's empire-building aspirations, this country is no empire - Americans are no single race with a single past, a single religion, a single idea of morals or community or death - because this is a heterogeneous nation, we tend toward tolerance & some appreciation of diversity - built up as a democratic republic, founded upon documents purposefully not claiming divine inspiration, & concerned with the affairs of persons among each other, there lacks the uncritical fanaticism possessed by the Romans, by Napoleon, by the Nazis. The Bush cabal has become the enemy more than Saddam Hussein or Osama Bin Laden ever were. I believe change is at hand.

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Besides, ~~of~~ terror, a perpetual state
of ~~terror~~, isn't good for business. For
the marketplace to flourish, it must
be rife with new ideas & eager consumers,
curious & excited for gadgets & movies
& new TV shows. The turning tide against
Bush has been fuelled by the corporatized
mainstream media as aught else—
they've watched the counterculture con-
jure an anti-war culture in film,
television, music & especially cyberspace
which they cannot attempt to ~~trap~~
commodify as long as they stand
side by side with those who are occu-
pying Iraq & bankrupting Americans in
a thousand malevolent ways.

What of a nation which does not
seem to manufacture anything any
more, ships its jobs overseas, crushes
its weakest members with healthcare
costs & low wage jobs for all? What
of a government attempting to demonize
immigrants & gays? What of a leader
who clearly believes in nothing,
a dumb, drawling, empty-hearted puppet
swinging his fist around at what polls
tell us are most of his fellow citizens?
An ambulating mush of idiocy & ideology?

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So I am hopeful, Jim. I choose to regard the current facts as ones to be interpreted optimistically. At moments I even see my current better days paralleling a nascent hope for the world - when I marched with thousands of others in Portland, OR back in March 2003 against the Iraq invasion, I was poor & heart-broken in my own life. I won't get that lost time back & far worse is the thousands who died in the War who won't be returned their lives -

But the omnipotent power Bush seemed to wield then is broken - he is a failure - those he crushed, tried to crush - some survived - many did - & we remember - we remember everything & regard him clearly now. There are millions of us now. We comprise the great garment of men & women in this land & many others. We are more & more of us uniting against him, against his minority & lunatic power mongers. Less & less divided by religion, race, sexuality, citizenship, political stripe, regarding him clearly & pushing, pushing him back, toward the

-19-

end of his powerful days.

And I, that is Kassi & I, are looking to Portland, to traveling ourselves to Oregon to live, sink roots deeper than we've got in Seattle. The particulars are still months to go in their working out but, again, hope, optimism, like I feel toward next week's election. I see in this mortal life rhythms, currents, despairing days, then lighter ones.

To be mortal, human or otherwise in this world, on this plane of reality, is to be aware of birth, of death, of change, of growth, of loss. Each individual learns of I & you & we & they. Learns because we are told stories intended to perpetuate cultures we inherit. Learn because others want us to survive.

Beauty happens. Shit happens. Some of it because $X+Y=Z$; some just because. I've tried to find what connects one to some to all, discover it for myself or find out who knows. Nobody knows. Nobody knows. Belief is not truth. Even fact is not truth.

I want to close this letter with a mention of something dear to us:

-20-
rock & roll. Specifically, I'm sitting
in this punk dive coffee joint listening
to The Who's new album, Endless Wire,
their first album since 1982. It's a
rocking sweetheart - I really like it!
Good for Townshend & Daltrey to find
their way back to each other &
their band's long half-bred fires....

2006 is I believe the first year since
you & I met almost 20 years ago that
we have not met somewhere in person.
That's sad but we'll re-unite next spring
in Boston, & Walden Pond, & Connecticut,
& walk some old steps new. Maybe
finally you & your guitar will travel out
West, maybe Seattle, Portland, maybe
Black Rock City finally. In lieu of your
presence, I carry around what you said
to me not long ago about friendship
being a higher kind of love. It was a
long time since I'd heard something
this profound. I thank you for it again.

Send along my love to your kin &
others who care to hear my name. One
night, hit a number & play all night
for me. I'll be listening.  10/3/2006



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Assistant Editor: Kassandra Souland

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Seattle, Washington



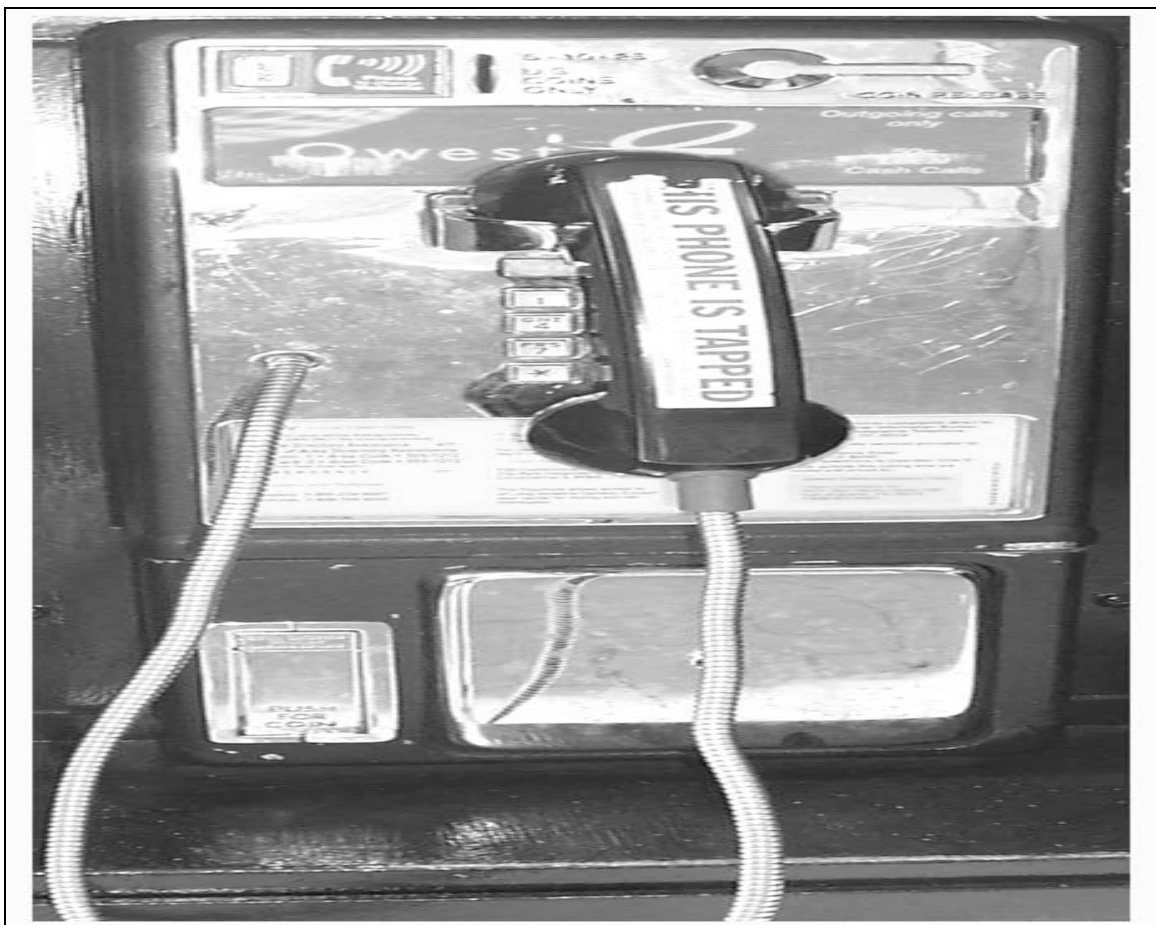
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George Dorn



Revolution Evolution

So you say you want a revolution? Well, so does everybody else: Free Palestine! Free Mumia! No War in Iraq/Iran/Anywhere! No Torture! No Blood for Oil! Save the Earth! The answer lies in Communism/Socialism/Democracy/Anarchy/Lyndon LeRouchel! This is the majority of slogans and topics I've seen at the protests and democratic open mics I've been to over the years and it has always given me a sense of unease for three reasons:

- 1) Despite the purpose of the protest, many causes and associated chants are usually present (see above), which to me suggests a lack of collective focus;
- 2) A little bit of reflection leads me to realize that the lack of focus seems to be due to the dire state of all of these (interrelated) issues. I think Daniel Pinchbeck summarized the state of our situation best:

Anxieties are multiplying. The environment is disintegrating. The heat is rising as the ozone layer thins. Jihad faces off against McWorld in senseless wars and televised atrocities. Populations are displaced as cities disappear beneath toxic flood tide. Rogue nations stockpile nuclear arsenals. Presidents assure us they will 'make the pie higher,' while increasing inequity and rubberstamping torture.

We are essentially getting cluster-fucked from all sides, and so the alarm sounds from those same directions; and

- 3) The so-called "action" of the protest tends to leave me feeling like little has been accomplished. How many times have you heard the following phrases: "This is only the first step," "It's not over," or "This is what democracy looks like"? Now how well do you think the protests lived up to, and/or followed up on, these messages? Something's wrong here. When did revolution cease to be revolutionary?

Perhaps it would be useful to look at the current state of the revolutionary ideal. Throughout history, large groups of people have inevitably become aware of an oppressive force in their lives or an injustice being done to a group/individual/place, and they take action to stop the dominating person/group/system by the means that they see as fit. The means have taken many forms over the course of human history from wars, torture, and executions, to civil disobedience, subversive media, and massive legal actions.

It is upon those three latter forms of action that all current revolutions seem to be stalling. Countless times during the course of each year, and in every major city around the world, people have gathered again and again to try and change the course of human events, to stop the injustices, to cease the needless destruction of people and environment, and yet the situation seems only to have gotten worse. While activists of today plan their actions according to the successful strategies of the 1960s, the dominator culture has been hard at work applying the tricks it has learned since then: enclosed "free speech zones" covered in barbed wire; rubber bullets; sonic and aquatic blasts; improved barricades; and an increasingly militarized and aggressive police force. If that weren't enough, the

aforementioned lack of collective focus has made many protests feel like fruitless efforts. Again, Pinchbeck hits the nail on the head:

Activists and radicals, horrified by the scorched-earth effects of globalization, insist 'another world is possible.' But few people have any idea of what that world would be.

We are effectively stuck and have run out of practical ways of challenging the status quo of the oppressive dominator culture.

So you say you want a revolution? Well, you know you can't do it like it's been done before. It's high time that the means of revolution underwent an evolution.

The Basic Ideological Foundation

If we want to change the way we approach revolutionary acts, we must first change fundamental aspects of our own psyche. All battles are lost and won in the mind, yet we seem to keep eschewing from facing off with the adversary that has held humanity back for so long: namely, the human ego. For all the progress we think we have made, to some extent we still resemble our primordial ancestors in the egotistical way we set up our social hierarchies, with the so-called "alphas" on top directing the fate of the "beta" masses in the tribe. This is also reflected in the basic structure of how revolutions have historically played out. You have an oppressive force in power, and a rebellious group that opposes that power. The rebellious force builds and builds until such a time that they take action and displace the oppressor. The rebels have won, but what happens next? What should they do? What direction should they take? Perhaps putting someone in charge would help them determine this, and what better person for the job than their revolutionary leader? And so the cycle begins again.

But why is there a cycle in the first place? If we have so much in common with primate alpha male hierarchies, why have we not remained in this social structure without argument or interruption? Why do we resist it? Perhaps Terence McKenna can shine some light on this:

The ecstatic and orgiastic, visionary and boundary-dissolving experiences, the central mysteries of the mushroom religion, were the very factors in the human situation acting to keep our ancestors human. The commonality of feeling generated by the mushroom held the community together. The divine, inspiring power of the mushroom spoke through the bard and singers. The indwelling spirit of the mushroom moved the hand that carved bone and painted stone. Life was lived not as we have chosen to imagine it, on the edge of mute bestiality, but rather, close to a dimension of spontaneous magical and linguistic expression that now shines only briefly in each of us at the pinnacle of experimental intoxication but that then was the empowered and enveloping reality: the presence of the Great Goddess....The nostalgia for the Gaian Earth Mother was suppressed but could not, cannot be ignored.

Whether or not you agree with McKenna's position that psilocybin mushrooms were once the catalyst for a creative, open-minded partnership culture, enough archeological evidence is presented in his book *Food of the Gods* to suggest that such a way of living was the norm for a variety of human cultures. Perhaps there is a memory of this period in the collective unconscious; a better way, which we can't quite remember. A mental itch we cannot scratch. It is akin to the line from James Joyce's *Ulysses*: "History is the nightmare from which I am trying to awaken." However, this is only half the story. History is not just a nightmare; it's a recurring nightmare. With every revolution, we try to wake ourselves from it, but we are inevitably pulled back into its murky depths.

Thus, for a revolution to be truly effective, have a lasting influence, and avoid the pitfalls of ego, it must be based on the following ideals:

- 1) There can be no centralized leadership. With no leader, there is nobody for the dominator to assassinate, and also no revolutionary leaders to get power-hungry and become the new dominator;
- 2) The system of forming ideals/projects/actions should be Confucian Open-Source, meaning that everyone is invited to contribute and improve upon the set of ideals and the proposed ways of executing them. There are no “lead programmers” or “sages,” per se. Regardless of experience or level of knowledge, everyone would have to maintain the modesty of knowing that they are all fellow students, participating by asking questions, citing examples, and engaging in constructive, mutually enriching conversations about various issues (Smith);
- 3) Any revolutionary movement should be open-ended and not necessarily sticking to a static set of ideals. “All is flow,” said Heraclitus, and one need only examine the contents of his or her life for a moment to know that this is true. A movement that is open to change and new ideas avoids the totalitarian pitfalls and egotistical fears of boundary dissolution that modern governments commonly have;
- 4) Any ideal in a revolutionary movement should always aim to increase the freedom and well-being of everyone without bringing harm to others. For instance, under such a system, gay marriage would be accepted without much debate as it increases the freedom of people everywhere to enter into a partnership with someone they love regardless of their gender. It also increases the health of the society by eliminating a form of sexual repression, and by increasing rates of adoption. On the other side of the spectrum, big businesses with foreign manufacturing facilities would be highly scrutinized to make sure that their workers are being paid a fair wage, and have safe and clean working conditions; and
- 5) Participants in this sort of revolution would have to take on the great personal task on of pacifying, obliterating, or transcending their ego (Pinchbeck). This could take the form of ritual entheogen use, meditation, or any other method the participant finds to be potentially useful in facilitating a worldview based on partnership and community rather than the glorification of the self.

Mutating New Counter Measures

Secondly, a successful contemporary revolution must reclaim ground on the oppressive faction by utilizing to the fullest the tools it has at its disposal. On one level this has been done in the form of subversive T-shirts, life-size protest puppets, exposé movies, banners, signs, and the like. On another level, activities such as covertly projecting short subversive films on the sides of buildings from an apartment, public participation performance art, chaos magick, or strategically constructing and placing subversive messages (such as putting stickers or art that subtly but effectively promote cognitive dissonance on horrendous food products, at military recruiting facilities, or at your local fetid pit of conservatism) might comprise other interesting ways of spreading ideas and evoking change.

However, we live in an age when dissenters are increasingly subject to various monitoring strategies and abuses of power. As you read this, your name, phone conversations, bank records, Web-surfing habits, and possibly your medical history are all potentially floating in some grand NSA databank. You might even be on a terrorist no-fly

watch list, not necessarily because you fit any such criteria, but because the TSA has quotas to meet. It seems that everything you do is being electronically catalogued and scrutinized, and that there is no recourse. But take heart: there is a solution. Simply remember this: for every measure there is a counter counter-measure, and if there isn't one, you can create one. I know this sounds like a daunting task, but take this little tidbit of news that surfaced earlier this year from Greece as a practical example:

"Greece reeled on Friday from revelations that unknown eavesdroppers listened in on the prime minister and other top officials for months in a scandal the media are calling the 'Greek Watergate.'" (Seattle Times, February 4 February 2006, p. A7)

Essentially, you have to beat them at their own game. If the government is going to tap us, then the phreakers should tap them. Want to do something a bit more local? Spy on police cars, law enforcement, and military officials with a short shotgun mic or cellphone camera. Or perhaps if you're more of a Maker, you could whip up a device such as this one envisioned by a Slash Dot commenter:

"I've been waiting for a mini-stealth-camera-and-recorder to appear. I want a little device, the size of a cellphone camera, that fits in a button or a necklace or a belt buckle or something equally inconspicuous. It should be connected to a waist controller, which would include battery pack, storage (hard drive or flash), and wifi. Wifi so that, whenever it can find an available internet connection, it can upload its contents to a secure server located elsewhere Just imagine that. "Sorry sir, you took a picture of something you weren't supposed to. I'm going to have to confiscate your camera." "The pictures are already in Texas, and in ten minutes they'll be posted online. Same as the recording of what you're saying right now. You really want to illegally take my possessions, Officer Frank, Number 3894?"

(<http://yro.slashdot.org/comments.pl?cid=15811973&sid=192586&tid=158>)

More l33t than all that? Then put your mad skillz to work on hacktivism. I mean, if Gary McKinnon could navigate the DOD network repeatedly and for extended periods of time, don't tell me you can't get the down and dirty data on other shifty and diabolical branches of government and individual politicians.

And when you've found something, post it up online. This might be as simple as a basic website with a download link, or something more involved and stealthy like re-titling your juicy media file as a popularly downloaded movie or song on a P2P network, or perhaps even sending out a harmless worm virus that automatically downloads the file to users' desktops all over the world, spreading itself through e-mail contact lists.

Do It Now

Thirdly, live the revolution everyday. I know this is somewhat of a cliché, but it's true. If there are a set of radical ideals you believe in, what good reason is there to put them on the back burner? Start now. Challenge yourself, your ideas, your perspectives, and challenge others as well. Become a generator of novelty and cognitive dissonance. Become one who lives possibilities that evoke the curiosity and wonder of your fellow humans. Again, if psychedelics and/or meditation are part of your chosen path, practice them on a regular basis (perhaps on weekends, as a way of making up for all those wasted years you may have spent at the certain institutions of worship). And don't put it off. Because if not now, then when? If not us, then who? Time to ramp up your evolution and start your revolution.

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Emmanuelle Brochier

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



New Songs (for Kassandra) (Continued)

Footballer

Not that crushed blood mountain night,
last, little memory, nothing to the high
moon's walk in the swamp, its neon cowboy
we saved, several worlds we blew up in song.

Wine & Women

Sweetness, I hope you're balling someone
or something good tonight. I hope you
supped with golden gladness, danced
with the free fury of an oft-dead soul, & on
the dawn swim where happiness mirrors the sky

Braided Rings

Her book told it sad & too long I listened,
molten slave on late night trains over high bridges,
why was this so? Music's sex & teeth remain!

They call it our wedding. Wings explode from
a crossed heart, the rude meat of those
gnarled hours gives over to hearts arriving ferocity.

Will

No hour to king & coin without a slave's wince,
will you shake & sing true? No world endless
by men's simple, brutal reckonings. Will you
let dream raw tonight anew? No love which
does not break & bury & raise. Would you be
free as the green beneath your feet? Will you?

Space

Little words, I meant them, let them go.
Each hour still glistens, on humility's prow.
Sweetest music passing, I mean to follow you.

Maya's Lament

'Tis a perpetual cauldron boiling 'round
the heart, thickening quiver of grinding passions,
aching nebulae of tangled faiths, frantic
run of wresting desires, a soup hoarier
with any life's summing fractured hours,
churning with dreams of that last great burst.

I water nothing & bear its growth as mark
upon my own. I break no rocks with my
arcing sweat to build up new. I sing
helpless with rushing black ink & wait the
words enough to crack this life of its rotted
shell, reach the root of its withering caterwauls.

Come high enough to breach its ever waxing shine.

Wrack

What fury tonight in old letters, crackling
 liquid talk of spiky brothers & pinkcheeked
 others, nothing bites like old hunger, how a
 year or an hour shone with softer, swifter
 light, what remain? What remain? Stains gone
 by, stains to go. Other nights by taller starlight
 will reach past again, better explain why.

Murkier

What was that strand riffing you
 years ago? Old city streets, their
 evening flashes of blue, riled spring
 lace & whole nights crumbled to a
 bare moment's sparkle, its lovely idiot
 remain. What can memory do but suffer
 your wither, bear your fractured bonds,
 lean you past mind's tangle to a rawer hue?

Through

What was that strand riffing you
 years ago? Old city streets, their
 evening flashes of blue, riled spring
 lace & whole nights crumbled to a
 bare moment's sparkle, its lovely idiot
 remain. What can memory do but suffer
 your wither, bear your fractured bonds,
 lean you past mind's tangle to a rawer hue?

Sky Song

What higher living than among burs & beams?
 Just look up! A freak's hunger for fruit made
 this world, scattered things cohered into night
 & tree. Now look down! An unknowing leap brings the
 best song, faith roar greatest when belief but a tendril.

Among

Swarming suns over sprinkling plains,
 what yet hid below in the bent empty
 house, some other year's bright, broken plan?
 What mornings watch brown hills twist
 with fire, slower hours drawn in lavender
 dusk, dreams of cities depleted to a raw few
 merchants of plastic moonlight & crumpled meat?

What looks toward where the traces fall,
 wilderlands remain, rutless beasts bound free?

Absolution

*"Our only guide is
our homesickness."*

—Herman Hesse,
Steppenwolf, 1929.

Sing yon blood-glow of moonlit ardor,
tonight's growling dream nearer our restless
fecund, & want better of time than its
brutal leavings, night's anxious wane through
daylight's familiar oncome, sudden a flash &
one set on by two, common wrong on a crawling street.

Sing & we deny trigger's cry as this world's
farthest truth, dare another way & later
come the numbers. More watches us kindly
than we know. Such the blind man & his
stick's snuffle down the street, warned by an
alley's breeze. A lost brother nods & remembers.

Sing while men divide the wilder lands into a
here & there, naming what they do not know,
missing the tongue of spark, of waver, of wane.
Soil will swallow the great wall & the ode's
reaching hand alike. All soaks empty in moonlight
upon its hour, climbs its beam, falls untold within.

Habit

Glance compelled & again by hard hips &
 steaming metal, whipping rhythm & cries for
 promises near or worlds buried. Every face
 its name yet knowing fruits little. I remember
 ragged nights, wet leaves blowing off the sill,
 knee to knee with him, her, we, hearts twist
 for warmth, high complex of matter. Wracked
 blowings, seeming gone. A shine & a tale, seeming gone.

Lorn

Dream a sun of flesh & flame,
 its buried scent in my blood, its memories
 how I watched breezes of daisies
 in a half-moon's light, its given some
 spectral new world I cannot imagine,
 its home where desire at rest, smiling to stone.

Gaol

I dream the cage within the cage
 & humble pass in & out. The water
 sparkles like kisses from a trusted
 mate & yon smoky white god points
 not up but around. A sore vow among
 kind leaves remains: to sing & love.

Compel

What convincing to live in a men-hewn world,
 coin's twist & bullet's bite, kings lord orchards &
 direct vengeance, which small kindness beats back the bomb?

Crumble in every fist too, ancient kisses remembered & sung.

Helpless

Call it God when the hour rests soft
 upon your cheek, the faces laugh &
 everyone kisses the stone pipe in great
 fraternity. Call it God when sunlight
 tips every heightless wood up there,
 when the air itself weaves sugared
 song through this hour rests softly
 upon your cheek, faces touch &
 withdraw through swathes of darkness
 & call it God as familiar bed beckons
 with its sweetheart smiling through
 your webs & chaff, knowing truer
 the wreckage of your heart fine
 & holy, alive, grateful, take her
 hand, let life's glint of a dream
 draw you pictures of the possible,
 call it God as new day streaks
 through them & something else reveals.

Weightless

The wall of beggars longer every night,
 nearer the sleep of merchants & preachers,
 where heat & bread kept & counted, longer
 every night, jungles flare, canyon rivers shout,
 longer every night, books of belief prophesy
 from the distance of tangled words, longer
 every night, those whose dreams bite &
 bite again, longer every night, soldiers
 watch through cracks & speak low, the
 wall of beggars longer every night,
 more lose a mother, a heart, a shop,
 a job, longer every night, the king
 thickens his wall & smiles from ever
 more afar, longer every night, feel
 it, nearer you, eyes you cannot avoid,
 drying mouths, hands clutching for the
 same air you'd share, but is there enough?
 Call it song but what do the days
 call for? Lose in the pretty & call you
 that a God? The wall of beggars longer
 every night, low heads mask childish
 memories, of sky, space, small kindnesses
 by big strangers, longer every night & when
 the whelm comes it will be those who
 sided coin against heart, iron against
 wood, army against soul, you will be
 buried, forgotten, lost, mounds of brutaled limbs.

Holy (i)

Between two shadows, up above a call
 from one to another, & here drifting near
 dream's moonlit curtain, look, there! Away!

Holy (ii)

Secret nebulae swept full into a
 lost, light gesture, memory blood-foe
 of every king. She smiled, called nearer.

Holy (iii)

Every petal a note, every note a face,
 every face gentles into dream & slides
 in with all, sugar's best sweet, a moment or more.

Stump

Halo shrouds the going & gone,
 corona of great leaves about a
 departing thing. What radiates describes
 secrets born in all come & coming.

Arc of Ray

Trail fruits off many ways,
high & out & other, fronds & webs
blow back the wind, & the cross
between here & hereon is complete
to the savage, calm mind observing.

Sway

Gather the hour sweetly near,
surf piling diamonds on the green shore,
lone gull near & fed, far hills & the
elusive question we ask them. Wooden
totems scattered, sun & sea-hewn, wishes touched.

Nothing, Everything

What connects high stars mull to a really good fuck?
Plenty of guide in that question's resolve.

Zero

It was crush sun by sun, flaw &
 distort & jerk. The grey building heaped
 coin through wires & cracking blood.
 Moons & truths gathered up to its door
 & perhaps smiling I let a few pass in.
 Some bastards won't break without breaking you too.

City

Something lost here, left back here,
 come back here, years later, where
 is it? Ratty kids yell gleeful high
 from jacked wheels, cruisers drift
 by watchful, there's where I sat
 with a poorfolks sandwich & a book
 urging higher by its tale of something
 lost, left back, now here again &
 what of it? Streets cross ghosts on
 tracks & beat sleeping corners. Music
 here still? The night won't tell,
 just push along with humidity's
 gnats, stars by pines by memories
 unraveled, & know something lost
 here, blinking traffic light spots an
 old Sunday paper, left back here,
 four youths scream for their best hours,
 come back here, finally. Nothing here, nothing here.

Raise

What of the past? How it sticks,
how a guru, how it betrays. Remember
everything, but lightly. Feel its flutter.
Know its pierce. Morning come, now breathe,
relax. Beck the new hour with all you will.

Fury

Among lorn faces want for balance,
its high & lower strums, sun's assured
arc into dream's pushing ripples. Grit
of memory in every seam, faster swim
strangely follows lesser, & on, now all
rests in a mold of memory. Fury, waver.

History

Fragrance of want in a night
wracked & blue, what hardly smolders
secret, flesh's godly cry for taking,
what blows countless by raw second & century.

Power

What cross between humble & thrust
will blow out the great green sparkles,
will bring a prosperity's shimmer near &
worth swinging & suffering for? Faces tangle
between wish & want, hunger swarms by
noon, the night eats every weak impulse blood & bone.

Shadows

When blood knows not blood, when fists
gird squalling streams & manless acres,
when the common high is crushing another's
path with scythe of coins, run, stumble, &
run again. Nightmares plenty await for every
laughing vengeance, mirthful stories of ruin by tavern's blur.

Weird

Longing not a ceaseless in same
waters, more a doe among ferns &
away, a cloud's violent hour & the night
cooler for dreams, a memory hooked around
tight, an else, a nothing, an all. A face
explains, the moon shines smart & detached.

Two walk among vines & swamp, everything
listens as they speak nearer to the core
burn, raw smolder within. "He meant it.
I wish I'd believed him." "They took the
rest. I remember everything." Tell it all &
what left but infinite remain?

I don't know any of you now or ever.
Is this chasm mine or ours or everyone's?
Touch tries, & for a passage there is calm
& common. A song cracks the worst of it,
laughter bites in tandem, hope blurs up, sharpens,
leaves in this grove seem a loving shade of green.

Can it? Maybe? Again the unclench tonight
into dreams where why & nonsense dance their lesson.

Doctrine

Romance the hard rhythms & reck the
change, conjure from the brightest of small
fingers, & something lost in wide, bracing nights,
raise it by scalpel & song for what affronts,
when someone says the war is endless,
reply that peace is longer. Love is great & small.

Brutal

Dream that man's death tonight, be a
welcome the world forgets to bestow,
there was kindness, there was water,
there were prayers & kisses, he wondered
about sky & soil, & reck how bullets
stripe fruits & no better. Reck how kings
wish for rows & silence. Reck how preachers
keep God safe in books & under rooves.

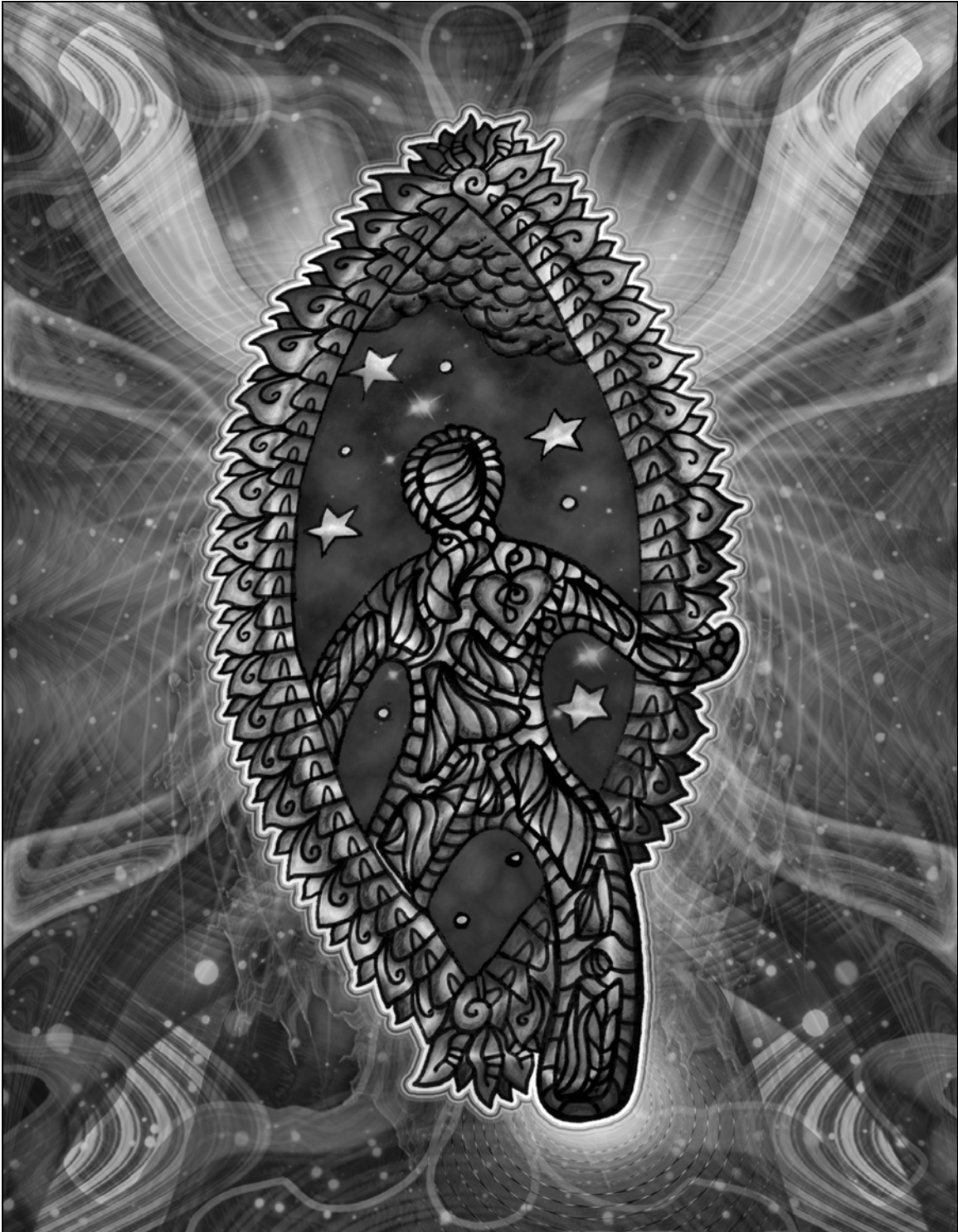
Dream that man's death so that he
does not die alone, be his carpet, be
his flower, will him an after for the
pain of his end & for the child who
roared because every hour was still to come.

Nearer

Find God in your dear forgotten hour,
among shadows & scarves, the news
of despair by numbers, there, trembling,
not a shape for music or wish, closer,
less clinging than a feeling, not hardly
a thought, there, that juice, bare, spiced wisp.



To be continued in Cenacle | 60 | December 2006

*Nemo Boko*

Carson McCullers



A Tree · A Rock · A Cloud

It was raining that morning, and still very dark. When the boy reached the streetcar café he had almost finished his rout and he went in for a cup of coffee. The place was an all-night café owned by a bitter and stingy man called Leo. After the raw, empty street the café seemed friendly and bright: along the counter there were a couple of soldiers, three spinners from the cotton mill, and in a corner a man who sat hunched over with his nose and half his face down in a beer mug. The boy wore a helmet such as aviators wear. When he went into the café he unbuckled the chin strap and raised the right flap up over his pink little ear; often as he drank his coffee someone would speak to him in a friendly way. But this morning Leo did not look into his face and none of the men were talking. He paid and was leaving the café when a voice called out to him:

“Son! Hey Son!”

He turned back and the man in the corner was crooking his finger and nodding to him. He had brought his face out of the beer mug and he seemed suddenly very happy. The man was long and pale, with a big nose and faded orange hair.

“Hey Son!”

The boy went toward him. He was an undersized boy of about twelve, with one shoulder drawn higher than the other because of the weight of the paper sack. His face was shallow, freckled, and his eyes were round child eyes.

“Yeah Mister?”

The man laid one hand on the paper boy’s shoulders, then grasped the boy’s chin and turned his face slowly from one side to the other. The boy shrank back uneasily.

“Say! What’s the big idea?”

The boy’s voice was shrill; inside the café it was suddenly very quiet.

The man said slowly: “I love you.”

All along the counter the men laughed. The boy, who had scowled and sidled away, did not know what to do. He looked over the counter at Leo, and Leo watched him with a weary, brittle jeer. The boy tried to laugh also. But the man was serious and sad.

“I did not mean to tease you, Son,” he said. “Sit down and have a beer with me. There is something I have to explain.”

Cautiously, out of the corner of his eye, the paper boy questioned the men along the counter to see what he should do. But they had gone back to their beer or their breakfast and did not notice him. Leo put a cup of coffee on the counter and a little jug of cream.

“He is a minor,” Leo said.

The paper boy sidled himself up onto the stool. His ear beneath the upturned flap of the helmet was very small and red. The man was nodding at him soberly. “It is important,” he said. Then he reached in his hip pocket and brought out something which he held up in the palm of his hand for the boy to see.

“Look very carefully,” he said.

The boy stared, but there was nothing to look at very carefully. The man held in his big, grimy palm a photograph. It was the face of a woman, but blurred, so that only the hat and the dress she was wearing stood out clearly.

"See?" the man asked.

The boy nodded and the man placed another picture in his palm. The woman was standing on a beach in a bathing suit. The suit made her stomach very big, and that was the main thing you noticed.

"Got a good look?" He leaned over closer and finally asked: "You ever seen her before?"

The boy sat motionless, staring slantwise at the man. "Not so I know of."

"Very well." The man blew on the photographs and put them back into his pocket. "That was my wife."

"Dead?" the boy asked.

Slowly the man shook his head. He pursed his lips as though about to whistle and answered in a long-drawn way: "Nuuu—" he said. "I will explain."

The beer on the counter before the man was in a large brown mug. He did not pick it up to drink. Instead he bent down and, putting his face over the rim, he rested there for a moment. Then with both hands he tilted the mug and sipped.

"Some night you'll go to sleep with your big nose in a mug and drown," said Leo. "Prominent transient drowns in beer. That would be a cute death."

The paper boy tried to signal to Leo. While the man was not looking he screwed up his face and worked his mouth to question soundlessly: "Drunk?" But Leo only raised his eyebrows and turned away to put some pink strips of back on the grill. The man pushed the mug away from him, straightened himself, and folded his loose crooked hands on the counter. His face was sad as he looked at the paper boy. He did not blink, but from time to time the lids closed down with delicate gravity over his pale green eyes. It was nearing dawn and the boy shifted the weight of the paper sack.

"I am talking about love," the man said. "With me it is a science."

The boy half slid down from the stool. But the man raised his forefinger, and there was something about him that held the boy and would not let him go away.

"Twelve years ago I married the woman in the photograph. She was my wife for one year, nine months, three days, and two nights. I loved her. Yes . . ." He tightened his blurred, rambling voice and said again: "I loved her. I thought also that she loved me. I was a railroad engineer. She had all the home comforts and luxuries. It never crept into my brain that she was not satisfied. But do you know what happened?"

"Mgneeow!" said Leo.

The man did not take his eyes from the boy's face. "She left me. I came in one night and the house was empty and she was gone. She left me."

"With a fellow?" the boy asked.

Gently, the man placed his palm down on the counter. "Why naturally, Son. A woman does not run off like that alone."

The café was quiet, the soft rain black and endless in the street outside. Leo pressed down the frying bacon with the prongs of his long fork. "So you have been chasing the floozie for eleven years. You frazzled old rascal!"

For the first time the man glanced at Leo. "Please don't be vulgar. Besides, I was not speaking to you." He turned back to the boy and said in a trusting and secretive undertone: "Let's not pay any attention to him, O.K.?"

The paper boy nodded doubtfully.

"It was like this," the man continued. "I am a person who feels many things. All my life one thing after another has impressed me. Moonlight. The leg of a pretty girl. One thing after another. But the point is that when I had enjoyed anything there was a peculiar sensation as though it was laying around loose in me. Nothing seemed to finish itself up or fit in with the other things. Women? I had my portion of them. The same. Afterwards laying around loose in me. I was a man who had never loved."

Very slowly he closed his eyelids, and the gesture was like a curtain drawn at the end of a scene in a play. When he spoke again his voice was excited and the words came fast—the lobes of his large, loose ears seemed to tremble.

"Then I met this woman. I was fifty-one years old and she always said she was thirty. I met her at a filling station and we were married within three days. And do you know what it was like? I just can't tell you. All I had ever felt was gathered together around this woman. Nothing lay around loose in me any more but was finished up by her."

The man stopped suddenly and stroked his long nose. His voice sank down to a steady and reproachful undertone: "I'm not explaining this right. What happened was this. There were these beautiful feelings and loose little pleasures inside me. And this woman was something like an assembly line for my soul. I run these little pieces of myself through her and I come out complete. Now do you follow me?"

"What was her name?" the boy asked.

"Oh," he said. "I called her Dodo. But that is immaterial."

"Did you try to make her come back?"

The man did not seem to hear. "Under the circumstances you can imagine how I felt when she left me."

Leo took the bacon from the grill and folded two strips of it between a bun. He had a gray face, with slitted eyes, and a pinched nose saddled by faint blue shadows. One of the mill workers signaled for more coffee and Leo poured it. He did not give refills on coffee free. The spinner ate breakfast there every morning, but the better Leo knew his customers the stingier he treated them. He nibbled his own bun as though he grudged it to himself.

"And you never got hold of her again?"

The boy did not know what to think of the man, and his child's face was uncertain with mingled curiosity and doubt. He was new on the paper route; it was still strange to him to be out in the town in the black, queer early morning.

"Yes," the man said. "I took a number of steps to get her back. I went around trying to locate her. I went to Tulsa where she had folks. And to Mobile. I went to every town she had formerly been connected with. Tulsa, Atlanta, Chicago, Cheeshaw, Memphis . . . For the better part of two years I chased around the country trying to lay hold of her."

"But the pair of them had vanished from the face of the earth!" said Leo.

"Don't listen to him," the man said confidentially. "And also just forget those two years. They are not important. What matters is that around the third year a curious thing began to happen to me."

"What?" the boy asked.

The man leaned over and tilted his mug to take a sip of beer. But as he hovered over the mug his nostrils fluttered slightly; he sniffed the staleness of the beer and did not drink. "Love is a curious thing to begin with. At first I thought only of getting her back. It was a kind of mania. But then as time went on I tried to remember her. But do you know what happened?"

"No," the boy said.

“When I laid myself down on a bed and tried to think about her my mind became a blank. I couldn’t see her. I would take out her pictures and look. No good. Nothing doing. A blank. Can you imagine it?”

“Say Mac!” Leo called down the counter. “Can you imagine this bozo’s mind a blank!”

Slowly, as though fanning away flies, the man waved his hand. His green eyes were concentrated and fixed on the shallow little face of the paper boy.

“But a sudden piece of glass on the sidewalk. Or a nickel tune in the music box. A shadow on a wall at night. And I would remember. It might happen in a street and I would cry or bang my head against a lamppost. You follow me?”

“A piece of glass . . .” the boy said.

“Anything. I would walk around and I had no power of how and when to remember her. You think you can put up a kind of shield. But remembering don’t come to a man face forward—it corners around sideways. I was at the mercy of everything I saw and heard. Suddenly instead of me combing the countryside to find her she had begun to chase me around in my very soul. *She* chasing *me*, mind you! And in my soul.”

The boy asked finally: “What part of the country were you in then?”

“Ooh,” the man groaned. “I was a sick mortal. It was like smallpox. I confess, Son, that I boozed. I fornicated. I committed any sin that suddenly appealed to me. I am loath to confess it but I will do so. When I recall that period it is all curdled in my mind, it was so terrible.”

The man leaned his head down and tapped his forehead on the counter. For a few seconds he stayed bowed over in this position, the back of his stringy neck covered with orange furze, his hands with their long warped fingers held palm to palm in an attitude of prayer. Then the man straightened himself; he was smiling and suddenly his face was bright and tremulous and old.

“It was in the fifth year that it happened,” he said. “And with it I started my science.”

Leo’s mouth jerked with a pale, quick grin. “Well none of we boys are getting any younger,” he said. Then with sudden anger he balled up a dishcloth he was holding and threw it down hard on the floor. “You draggle-tailed old Romeo!”

“What happened?” the boy asked.

The old man’s voice was high and clear: “Peace,” he answered.

“Huh?”

“It is hard to explain scientifically, Son,” he said. “I guess the logical explanation is that she and I had fled around from each other for so long that finally we just got tangled up together and lay down and quit. Peace. A queer and beautiful blankness. It was spring in Portland and the rain came every afternoon. All evening I just stayed there on my bed in the dark. And that is how the science come to me.”

The windows in the streetcar were pale blue with light. The two soldiers paid for their beers and opened the door—one of the soldiers combed his hair and wiped off his muddy puttees before they went outside. The three mill workers bent silently over their breakfasts. Leo’s clock was ticking on the wall.

“It is this. And listen carefully. I meditated on love and reasoned it out. I realized what is wrong with us. Men fall in love for the first time. And what do they fall in love with?”

The boy’s soft mouth was partly open and he did not answer.

"A woman," the old man said. "Without science, with nothing to go by. they undertake the most dangerous and sacred experiment in God's green earth. They fall in love with a woman. Is that correct, Son?"

"Yeah," the boy said faintly.

The old man reached over and grasped the boy by the collar of his leather jacket. He gave him a gentle little shake and his green eyes glazed down unblinking and grave.

"Son, do you know how love should be begun?"

The boy sat small and listening and still. Slowly he shook his head. The old man leaned closer and whispered:

"A tree. A rock. A cloud."

It was still raining outside in the street: a mild, gray, endless rain. The mill whistle blew for the six o'clock shift and the three spinners paid and went away. There was no one in the café but Leo, the old man, and the little paper boy.

"The weather was like this in Portland," he said. "At the time my science was begun. I meditated and I started very cautious. I would pick up something from the street and take it home with me. I bought a goldfish and I concentrated on the goldfish and I loved it. I graduated from one thing to another. Day by day I was getting this technique. On the road from Portland to San Diego—"

"Aw shut up!" screamed Leo suddenly. "Shut up! Shut up!"

The old man still held the collar of the boy's jacket; he was trembling and his face was earnest and bright and wild. "For six years now I have gone around by myself and built up my science. And now I am a master, Son. I can love anything. No longer do I have to think about it even. I see a street full of people and a beautiful light comes in me. I watch a bird in the sky. Or I meet a traveler on the road. Everything, Son. And anybody. All stranger and all loved! Do you realize what a science like mine can mean?"

The boy held himself stiffly, his hands curled tight around the counter edge. Finally he asked: "Did you ever really find that lady?"

"What? What say, Son?"

"I mean," the boy asked timidly. "Have you fallen in love with a woman again?"

The old man loosened his grasp on the boy's collar. He turned away and for the first time his green eyes had a vague and scattered look. He lifted the mug from the counter, drank down the yellow beer. His head was shaking slowly from side to side. Then finally he answered: "No, Son. You see that is the last step in my science. I go cautious. And I am not quite ready yet."

"Well!" said Leo. "Well well well!"

The old man stood in the open doorway. "Remember," he said. Framed there in the gray damp light of the early morning he looked shrunken and seedy and frail. But his smile was bright. "Remember I love you," he said with a last nod. And the door closed quietly behind him.

The boy did not speak for a long time. He pulled down the bangs on his forehead and slid his grimy little forefinger around the rim of his empty cup. Then without looking at Leo he finally asked:

"Was he drunk?"

"No," said Leo shortly.

The boy raised his clear voice higher. "Then was he a dope fiend?"

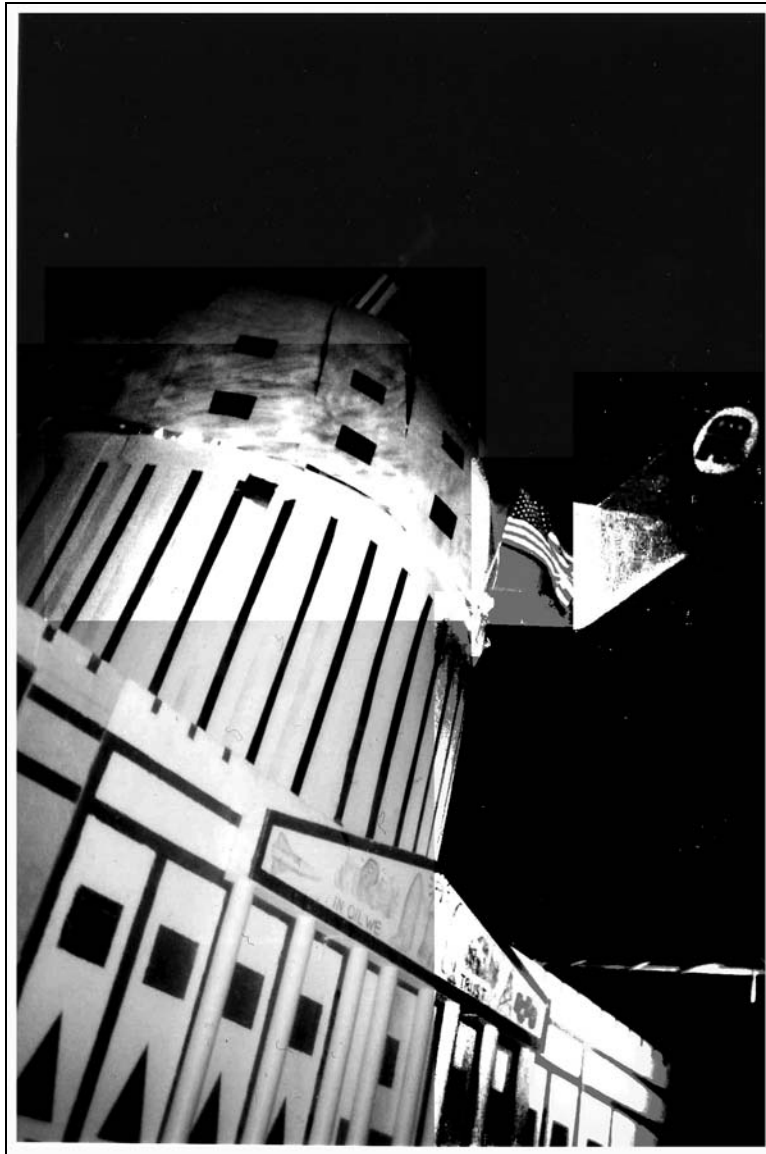
"No."

The boy looked up at Leo, and his flat little face was desperate, his voice urgent and shrill. "Was he crazy? Do you think he was a lunatic?" The paper boy's voice dropped suddenly with doubt. "Leo? Or not?"

But Leo would not answer him. Leo had run a night café for fourteen years, and he held himself to be a critic of craziness. There were town characters and also the transients who roamed in from the night. He knew the manias of all of them. But he did not want to satisfy the questions of the waiting child. He tightened his pale face and was silent.

So the boy pulled down the right flap of his helmet and as he turned to leave he made the only comment that seemed safe to him, the only remark that could not be laughed down and despised:

"He sure has done a lot of traveling."



Ric Amante**Her Radiant Upward Vagrancy**

Brash and enlivening, loose-limbed and flush
the May dawn unscrolls—pink ziggurats,
golden scintillas, gray scimitars she sees and says—
an ornery indigent hunkered down
on a slab of blue granite.
Hunkered down yet gazing up
through crosshatch of branch and wire
for the bright red thread of a cardinal,
a woodpecker's spiral ascent.
Or morning doves with orange coos,
a mockingbird running the changes—
calls to bring her song to theirs,
however much she feels
beyond anything so whole.
And what of the torn sleeves and mind
when the door to this temple
swings free each time?
To just bend a cold ear, turn a lone eye.
Hunkered down yet moving along
among clouds, birds, misfortune—
inhabiting a stage
whose sky-bound melodies
will lift the ache within.

Shiva With Walkman in Malden

December air thick with balsam fir and fried chicken
settles in slush-filled ruts of ice
on the front lot of the strip-mall.
She moves light and sure through turning cars,
her mind a deathless song.
Suddenly over headphones crash of tsunami
breaks in and rushes all stations.
She moves light and sure through market doors,
her mind a deathless song.
'Tins of green curry don't make a sound,
sacks of Thai rice doze in low berths.
Happy shoppers,
(trust and fable of abundance)—
floating bodies,
(horror and faith of her ways).
The morning sun that patterns wood floors
same star that breaks open the sea.
She moves light and sure through daily chores,
her mind a deathless song.

Dream #9

I watched it fall from star-thick space,
an unclaimed face
white-hot and alluring,
striking earth without sound or smoke
in a weedy corner lot.
I ran over and wrapped it—
oval, seamless, unformed—
in a cool flannel sheet.
A radiant, placid face—
eerily familiar for all its strangeness.
I was told to take it to a man in a suit
on the 44th floor of the Trans-America Pyramid
to have him conduct an interview
for the eleven o'clock news.
He lifted the sheet, panicked,
sent us packing.
On a splintered green billboard
beside the Divisadero off-ramp,
I nailed up the sheet
level to the eyes of all who sped by.
The message-board ran the words
“mirage” and “redemption”
in an endless electronic loop.
I awoke eviscerated, modified,
sputtering something about
“the two-fold mystery
of an alien messiah.”

Downtown Crossing

You'll be riding this same train, Walkman tuned
to modern rock at the dial's far left.
Eighty three, and still transformed
by the sonic lift of guitar lines,
by precision and passion entwined.
You'll leave at the station the vacancies
of thwarted, bloodshot eyes—
thirty years without a blackout—
mind now taking snapshots
of waterlilies, smokestacks, green signs.
You'll release the nights that veered
to ruin, a blind man climbing steps
rotted and loose at the ends—
using screws today instead of tacks.
You'll be prompt, aware, grateful—
yet won't arrive at all,
this same train leaping from the rail
to a vastly different song.

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Notes from the Northwest

Introduction: This new feature marks a sequel of sorts to Notes from New England, begun in issue 24-25 (Winter 1998). By way of introduction, I wrote then: "This series is intended as a gathering-place for observations of various lengths upon the world around me. It will be culled, like much of my writing, from my notebooks, and perhaps these thoughts will be expanded upon sometimes as well." I have recently realized anew that sometimes my private writing wants for an audience, & thus here is its cobbled-up venue for such. I think reviving this project is a hopeful gesture, from some beloved old days toward these later ones & those to come. The torch needs an upraised hand to carry it along. —RS, 10-31-2006

If George Bush stopped lying for just a moment & said, "The invasion of Iraq was tied to political security through strategic military dominance, economic prosperity through petrochemical plentitude, & religious supremacy for Christianity over every other dominant religion in the world," some would have stayed with him. If he had said, "Americans have too many rights & freedoms, are lazy & coddles, & need to be massed coherently toward the perpetual reign of American Empire & its countless benefits to Americans," some would have balked; some would have cheered. If he had said, "The American race is superior for its heterogeneity but must now seal its borders & purge those who do not worship money & Christ, do not regard English as the superior human language, & cannot see that rights for women, minorities, & gays must be curtailed for the greater good," he would right now be in a much stronger position to defend his party's dominance of government in the November 2006 Congressional elections. His lying came from weakness, his downfall from trying to build a modern global empire while pretending he aspires to be no more than a good president, & willing to let go his power in two years. He yearns to be the king, he's said as much himself. If he had gone the Hitler route fully, nakedly, his rise would still be marked, & his inevitable fall, like Hitler's & all other emperors before him, would be several years away. Perhaps those who are hopeful his end is near will be proven wrong in early November, but I don't think so. I think his fall is becoming more audible as the ground nears. The sound of a lunatic's last moments of rage, his cry that it's not fair, none of it. Many hear this cry now & there is a greater feeling of hope, however dark-hued it remains, than in years.

A soul is consumed by the years, by minutes, & what defense? Art doesn't explain death or what other worlds there be or may come. Art feeds from the world & then feeds it in return. Faith in Art is faith in an act, not an explanation.

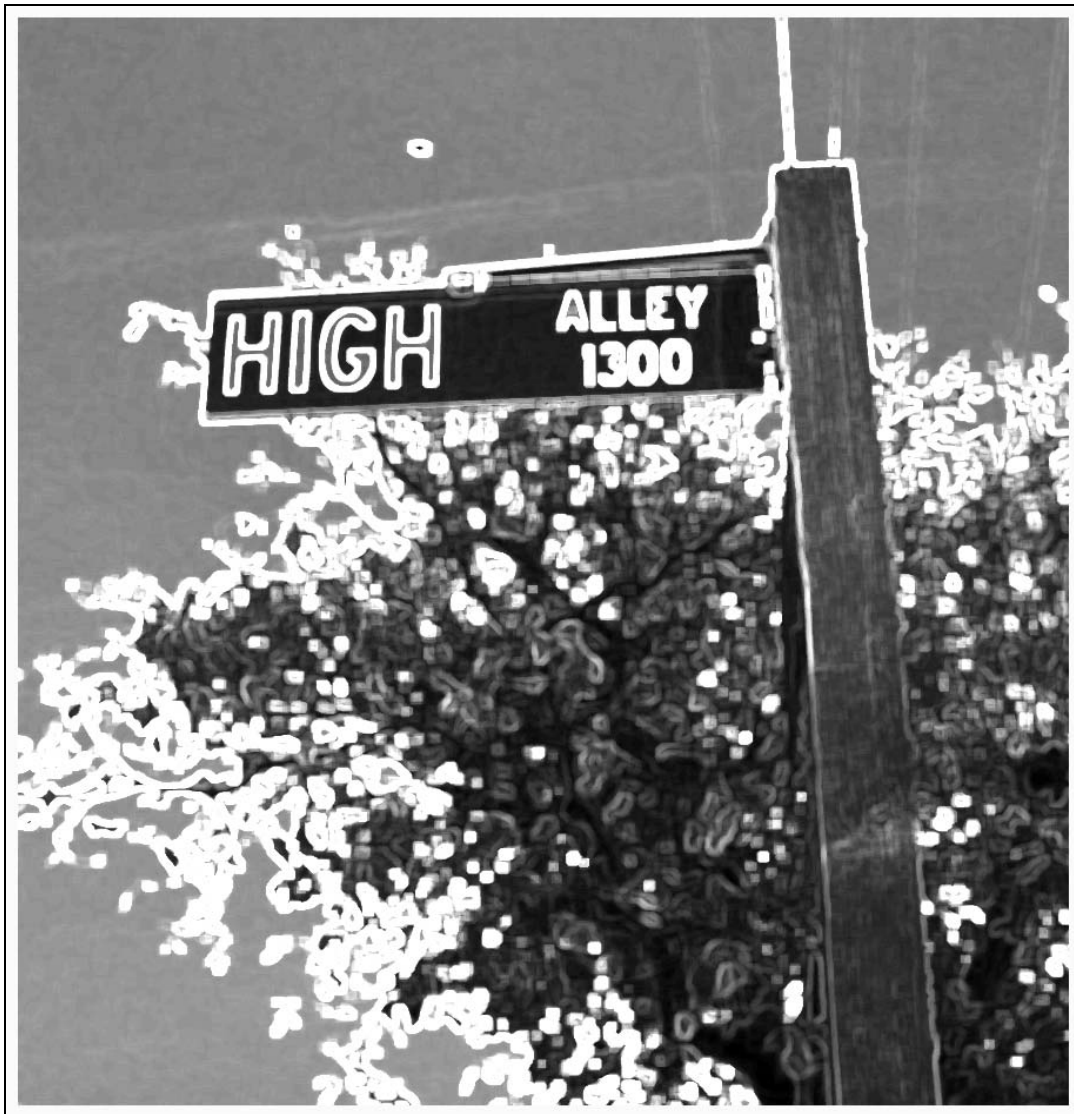
What could possibly explain the world, except maybe there is no fixed destination? The outcome may be one that every minute is creating but that minute itself is also an outcome.

There is freedom enough, possibility enough, that while the body does die, & maybe that's endgame or maybe not, nonetheless there is some free space to operate with, within.

Soul's defense, if any, is to stay awake & aware. Mostly life seems different-day-same-old-shit but not all. There is unpredicted movement & thought. There is chance. There is mystery. The world still eludes source, purpose, definition, destination. Find something in this when nowhere else.



I don't advocate use of psychedelics because this is as personal a choice as ones about sex, or God, or war. That said, I'd wish psychedelics had a better regarded place in society, their use an activity not everyone chooses, like not everyone chooses to sky-dive, or fast for peace. A place where those bound in their direction along whatever paths, for a myriad of reasons, may arrive to them unafraid of jail or shun, & with great focus on the doors about to be opened, passed through, & with trusting guides for as long as needed, & with a safe place to land after the experience has passed a bit, as much as it ever does. All of this would require a trust of human decency & curiosity, & an ease with this world, which is little evident in most spheres of Western society.



The urge to Beauty is a primal one, clusters so deep down with wish for order & health, with desire for solitude, with desire for fraternal firelight, what deeper? The chaos of burst blood? Of arcing violence in dreams? Of what calm eyes do not tell?

Sense of Beauty a stretching, animal sensation, a rhythm, a thrumming, a sense of being played, become a power's clean, purposeful instrument, being moved, being fed, being breathed, & exhausted when let up, let be—

Autumnal colors visual doorways to peace, deep-caved peace. Pretty bodies, an easy bold rush, the lick, the bite, the take, a stronger rush, what rises from deeper than Eros' soil, what builds high & does not recede with a breath & a spasm, possible never to know?

Fear of Beauty's lack, selfish for mine, selfish for a little more. Then another breath, & let it open out, spread some around, now some more, the echoes, the harmonies, return of the mystery in not knowing, in how memories forecast poorly, in what else never lets go, a soft connecting something, what it may be, how it may last.





Judih Haggai



First Then Last

I saw it first
the last time I floated along the dregs and unspoken
mentions
those brief few centuries
so long ago
so quick to pass
so swift to reconvene

I saw the sweaty arms lift the sacred pillars
uncover the buried treasures
the essential Essene gospels
the Gnostic knowing nothingness

I heard the silent chant of tantric disappearance as
all rebirthed
I heard

I swam the waters so dry, so empty
I sank beneath the rafts of refuge
I crossed the bridge barely built

it was first, then last
and now it is again

Ill You Shun

I steal what I cannot have
I covet what is clearly yours
osmosis is my friend
I live in the deep end

I swallow your air
your fine delight and beat
I borrow greedily
I swim in your ferocity

myself, a dry sponge
I drink your sweat and tears
I birth your lusty dreams
you think I'm me, but I'm you it seems

Crystallized Crumbs

When lost children
leave crystallized crumbs
on a trodden forest trail
sunlight teardrops shine tomorrows
moist heaving hearts
drink beams of crow and sapphire
deep resonant drums beckon motion

and following the chant of the moment
lost children reclaim family
home of treehouse clarity
transported in a wheel of nowhere fast

leaving crystallized crumbs
yesterday sighs with patience
future is nothing without past.

see how time sounds

listen to the smell of early morning
hold the view in the palm of your neck
roll the minutes like a well-loved joint
light the dawn in a rainbow of music
sing the gentle light alive
wrap this heartbeat in a kiss and a willow weep
breathe the miracle of now

bent like a reed

wind swift to sing its nightsong
bent like a reed
a moment in flute
sigh and simmer
frogs in the atmosphere
soft stars remember galaxies
lonely universe beckons us home

I Come to You Like This

Yes, I forgot to oil my arms
my bare skin does not glisten
neither does my mind

I slide down a splintered banister
in a t'ai chi high thrill move
but my silken hair is unformed
and my toes do not reflect the summer sky

I come to you on a whim and a breeze
unadorned, yet ready to shine
naked skin undressing

Inner Autumn

The leaves hang humbly upon their branch
till midnight strikes
and it's a rush into an eavestrough
a sudden downpour of pecans
a secret rebellion of outer niceties
it's all hell breaks loose while the townfolk sleep

Then early to rise and the smile glues to the face
the pecans show themselves pie
the rooftops glisten from the dance of leaves

Inside, I weep with the tears of death
life purges life
cycles forge ahead

What was sunny and bright
loops into gray, dull routine
the crunch of my feet, the sideswiping snail
all loathe to admit what's so clearly amiss

My heart stagnates—a beat of emptiness
steady, empty, steady, heavy
the cloak of habit covers my sighs
where am I?

Have I fallen into a loop of duty
my artist gone into hibernation
my inner saint off to an ashram
where?

I trudge through this day
crying for my inner joy
where have I gone?

WITHIN'S WITHIN: SCENES FROM THE PSYCHEDELIC REVOLUTION

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Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Things Change (Six Thresholds)

[a new fixation]

Morning. Resurrection. The least thought matters. Morning. Desire. Slim lashes of flame.

Possibilities.

A stream of mirrors where colors bounce playful, savage, outlaws in shift & movement, two break into five, five into a hundred, two, a few, shifting, moving, things change, things, things change, change, change—

& night trips into today, unfractured by light, unsanctioned in this wild free run, night frail & fabulous, the least thought matters, the pen scratches, buzzing the paper, marauding, etching it forever, scarring its blankness, with truth, with choice, with magick, with gleam, one hand holds another, touch bloods now with furious life—

a note diminishing always, a rock, a flame, no time—

She looks at me & smiles. Hands me a peach-colored crayon

“Try” she says

“Me?”

“Yes”

“If you wear the pink gown & red bonnet”

“And you wear the blue suit & yellow hat?”

I nod.

I take her hand, palm-side up, & trace a diminishing circle from palm’s edge to its center. Tickled, she giggles.

The least thought matters, a ton & a feather, the gown & the suit dancing, the morning & night, the vase of poppies, spring in the loins, summer in the belly, winter in one’s dreams, autumn in one’s heart—

Next threshold, what it might be, heavy glass tank, water filled but depths unrevealing, black glass, black water, a shrug each for what when why.

What may come, I kiss her lips. She is stay, she is grounding, direction & fresh air, I kiss her lips for these things & their many kin.

I hand her back her crayon & she nods; keeps the thick swirl on her palm tho; later carefully incorporates its wax substance into a new picture.

What may come, we sit here tonight, close, clear, bells, high, sit together while most people & events pass us unminding, each gurgling with the cream of self-obsession throat-high—we sit here & what passes perhaps touches too, down in the roots, down in the dreams.

Down in the dreams, into the crackling in the murk, laughter green fruit hanging from trees & electrical poles, down in the dreams, where none mind the myth of You & I, You & I, down in the dreams, the raging ragged colors, spinning freaks, fires everywhere, the night unending, the night crowned with full-moon & low wet stars

Rebecca, stay mine forever—stay mine no matter how far I go—

Art the understanding between us, love the shine, I want to tell her of so many rotten moments, rudeness in a shove, indifference in a crowd, loneliness dwelt in a brick box, but no, what reality have these things? Passing, at most—I want to tell her she's miracle, & more than this—

mostly to sit hands twined—spit toward years scrawny, years gone—neither does the future mean much—a carrot, someone's gold-face clock slowing down—

just now—shine & understanding—a story making its obscure way along—

closer, Rebecca, closer, closer to me in the deeper ways—beyond machine & incentive, beyond even touch—beyond shine & understanding—beyond the knowable or possible—

she returns to our bedroom wearing my black t-shirt in blue swiggly letters says Phish & pink panties I've stroked many times—

with mind chocolate chip ice scream & a smirk—

I put down my pen but she shakes her head, rolls into my lap & feeds me while I continue writing these words til her caresses slow then awhile stop me—

Richard James Americus sits in the other bedroom at 50 Harvest Street, strumming softly, his wife Franny listening even as she lightly dreams—

His thoughts of his band, of the months passed since he released them back to their separate lives for a break, a sabbatical, & how they all left Hartford, save drummer Cecile Grey, who lives at the local YMCA, but how none seemed eager to go—

"I have a feeling we'll have a lot to do together again soon. I'll call, I promise" was the whole of his explanation.

Franny's sleep deepens & her soft smile evens out. She'd liked the Starlight Lounge, & McFarland will surely never forget the moment she insisted on the dancing the place's sign promised—she'd danced with both Rich & McFarland & he'd shown himself a nimble gigantus of a man—Miranda had demurred Rich's offer but said "maybe next time" with a smile—

"Is that place real, Rich?"

"I don't know. Real enough."

He strums, poking around new sounds & old, listening, sniffing along, & always the wiggly sense of his bandmates—Grey, Pascale, Tormé, Black—& the pressing shimmer of his heroes—Lennon, Townshend, Hendrix, Clapton—& the shifting bloom of his blood-loves—Rebecca, Franny, Reality, Robert—& the scratching tickle of his mysteries—Soulard, Mickey, Knickerbocker, Time—& a swirl high & low of other faces & places

Strumming—the hustle for a new song's hook or groove—shape the noise—thicken, push, chase, release—

Far more yes than no in recent years—not a man without fight in him, far from it, but rather a turning sense of what’s worth engaging—

his music still the magick, all the devils & the angels, what to heed, what to hurry toward—

himself 41 years old, his wife now 26, his daughter 21, her husband 37, his bandmates further along in their 40s, his cafe’s barman a walk from 60, Knickerbocker near 70 or past, Jim Reality near 50—

he senses other old friends will be back around too—Ricky Jensen, X the Space Alien—David Time?—Frere Gregory?—Guy Lemond?

Noisy Children’s records are still in print, even on LP, & the band has a following among fans of what lately are called jambands—

Grey talks to the cyberspace fan club kid with the peace sign earring & the excellent homegrown mushrooms—not a tripster very often, the drummer drinks the kid down, lacing his tall tales with the occasional truth or glimmer of one—

“Was Luna T a real person?”

“Nah. Just a figment.”

“Rich made her up?”

“He didn’t have to. She came with the place. He inherited her.”

“Then who hired you in 1980 as Luna T’s house band?”

“A man named Dr. Jimmy. Smoked rock & watched cartoons.”

“‘Dr. Jimmy’ is a Who song! C’mon!”

“Never knew the shagger’s real name. He came & went early on.”

& so on. Rich usually just listens, sips, nods. The kid is scared of him. Grey says Americus fucking **hates** fucking computers.

“Does he like mushrooms? I’ve got some Amanita—”

Grey taps his empty mug with a frown. The kid desists. Mr. Bob the barman draws two fresh ones.

Americus now plays more purposefully, feeling chords coalesce—& strands of lyric near—Franny is dreaming his music now—she often does—& eventually he notices her smile & purple eyes among his notes—

The endless fecundity of the blue-eyed red-haired specter dancing midst fowl & tree within his being—she pulses—All that is, pulses—Yet she pulses singular—why?—much unknown—

& the blonde woman on the bed pulses—pulses, growls, licks, & roars—giggles, gropes—sighs—his blonde mate—his woman, as much as words can unsheath & tell of matters of light & flow—his mate, now, always—the always of humans, hardly a small bird feeder of years—but their much larger wonderment toward the beyond—hunger to be beyond being—to touch & know what calls always—

the tune is strange—he grasps enough to keep for when he can play it for Pascale—longhaired obscure guitar godd—Ronnie will listen, eyes closed, perhaps ganja pipe in hand—listen, touch, probe—& begin to receive—& eventually his acoustic will come out—always, always Ronnie Pascale launches work on a new song with acoustic, not electric—builds from precision to supernova, craft to flash—

& eventually the rest will come in—each mysteriously but surely—Gretta Black’s bass seeking to cement housing to foundation—her bass fumbling into harmony with Grey’s drums—each listening to the other—asking questions with strings & sticks—answering in kind—

& Stephanie Tormé’s keyboards—rarer flowers, wild; country maidens, barelegged, tumbling, arising; towering spiritual edifices of no known human religion—teaching the song what it needs—

Americus & his words at some point too—no method, no way, just magick, just danger—

til a shine becomes a song—a strum blooms furiously—new, fuckmiraclenew—each & every time—

“how does the band come up with great new songs even after all of these years?” Grey is bluntly asked in a Noisy Children cyberspace chatroom interview.

“how the fuck do I know???” he replies.

Something from the past careens on yet—shimmer—bright & desert-deep—old wounds, old ways—chiding energy, whipping hunger—dead streetlamps, empty roads—the hard fluid of awareness & regret—shadows under starlight, silent desert shrines swept clean—damning greedy nihilistic, a jittering fool, sunk hard into a cave called Creation—but always crawling out—always sinking—but always crawling out—hope not in the particulars but in the fact of existence

there—look—there! the She-moment of first light—few catch it every day but most at least once—thickening at the breach into new day—look! seeping, slurring, sky tickled then stroked then smiled ‘pon & taken—look!

To write from confusion as much as clarity, both cloud & lark, composing creature of dismay, cock-bearing freak, shadows & blips of girl energy, anima animus, & beyond, climbing, crawling, careen & crawl—

To love like a heartbeat, expand, contract, hurry, slow, wonder & certainty, to live without understanding, without destiny, love a fading light, love a desert fullmoon, love a feather, love a ton—to love fun-nutty & fierce-fat—

To struggle, to push, to flap, to trick & plead—not an answer but made of powder—not a truth but damp & hungry—not a mob but peppered with doubts—not a lord beyond a cutting giggle—

She looks at me, having stopped my hand, raised my face to hers. Smiling but wifely concerned.

"I'm OK, Reb"

"Sure?"

Nod.

"OK"

"Thank you."

Nod.

To write in the language of dust, swirl & flow & perseverance, in the language of water, mist & matter, the language of night, growl & hunger & power—

someone advised someone that the next step is to double back—find where the poison began its hustle, & then before, resume a different way, this was in a book, I sit here tonight doubting it, on a train, a mild night, a slightly sheered full moon—joy is flaring now, always has been—sweet & few the days even mud-ugly & shit-nothing—

umm—

Music permeates, music eludes—she sits quietly in half-light listening to soft music—I sleep in our bed nearby but watching her—there are moments like these intense isolated obvious but unconfessing:

clues to distinct puzzles, helpless

rocks shaped by missing watery
fingers, I don't know

Neither slowing nor hurrying will help,
blessings

Things change reveal both the answers & their questions, things change, the gurus kept & those discarded, things change things with wings names with flames odds & godds though still a hand reaches & may not see reward, the plane may crash, the lover may return.

The art which eludes the clutching man. The truth which eludes the clutching race. The hands which wish to open, wish to learn how, release to night, to claws of want, what keeps coming round sounds like truth, or begins to—

"Cecile, where does he get his ideas?"

"Where else? Pussy. That's the only idea anyone's ever had that still counts."

"Grey, that's beautiful. I shed me a tear."

"What? Americus made it for an interview?"

"You're right. It's all about shag. Always has been."

"This kid wants depth & meaning. Beyond shag."

"Nothing beyond shag. Pointless to look"

"Americus has a good one too—but he could have a dozen good ones if he liked"

"One muse at a time, Grey. Just one."

"If I was tall as an oak & sang lead in a band I'd have a ring of girlies; one for every mood, every season, one for if I wanted two, or three. One for—"

"You're drooling, Grey. Wipe up."

“Yessh mass’r!”

Rebecca bumps into me, purposefully to steal my attention back, hardly difficult at all—

“The power is raised again tonight”

“Yes”

“Fierce & running, perpetual, a ton, a blaze”

“Yes”

“Draw. Paint. Rebecca.”

“I am.”

“Now?”

“Yes.”

“Oh. I don’t know.”

“I’m strumming it, making it buzz & hiss.”

“Oh!”

“The kind which does not slow or end”

“Yes”

“*That* kind”

“That kind”

Power shaped & strummed, power summoned, a velocity, a fugue, eyes with the dance of lit gems, stroking til savage, suck her, save her, kiss her, keep her.

“See what I mean? Pussy! Where all the great ideas come from—I know what I’m saying!”

Rebecca nods, continues to draw.

“There! Yr ol lady agrees!”

“We all agree, Cecile”

I stop. Relent, a little. “Holy & tattered world, both”

“What else to do but rock out, eh?” sneers Grey. He’s right. Guitar, thighs, acceleration. *Rock out.*

Begin in the mystery of what is, what isn’t, what was, scirrocco & silhouette, canyon & cougar

“Bollocks” growls Grey “Just bollocks”

“A problem, Grey?”

“This is no novel or book! What is it?”

“Long—getting longer”

“Hippy shit—that’s all”

“I suppose so”

“And it’s never going back to what it was”

“Nay, Grey”

His tough blue eyes roam me—“Are you so sure that writing books for a living is so bad? Writing books that people read?”

“I tried too long ago for it to matter—it’s better this way—”

“Is it?”

“Yes. There’s no pressure. No performance to be judged. No money expected. No critics.”

“You’re not man enough to face a few boo-birds?”

“I’m not interested in boo-birds or yayy-birds even.”

“What then?”

“I don’t know.”

“How can you not know? Notebooks & more & you don’t know why?”

“No. Grey. I don’t.”

He quiets.

Rebecca hooks my attention again, smile, love, Art. Yes! Yes.

“Something more” I mumble to her neck, in her hair.

“Yes” she breathes.

“I don’t know what—not now—maybe I did—maybe I will again” my kisses more lavish, Rebecca enjoys, is silent—

“Do I have to know?” Untwined we stare each other.

“No,” she says. “I don’t think so.”

“What then, Grey? What do you want? What should I do?”

“Stop expecting the trees to talk back. Stop believing they care.”

“I *like* believing that they care. I like talking to them.”

“Better than people?”

“Sometimes.”

“Because they don’t talk back? Don’t doubt you, confuse you, make you feel low?”

“Sort of.”

“I just play drums. I don’t have your answers.”

“I know.”

He glares at me. “Work it in then! It might help sometimes.”

Grey & I glare at each other: “I can’t do what *anyone* wants, Grey. Can’t, *won’t*.”

He sips from his pitcher of Guinness—Mr. Bob indulging him this privilege tonight—

“What about the red-haired wench?”

“Merry Muse?”

He sips hard.

“She’s never told me what to do. Just urged & irritated me on.”

“& wifey there?”

“Rebecca. Not wifey!” she yelps.

“I know, kid. Sorry.”

“Say it, then.”

“What?”

“Say my name.”

He sips. “Rebecca.” He sips harder. “Dorothy.” He finishes foamily. “Americus.” Grins goofy.

“Soulard.”

“Eh?”

“I’m married.”

"Yah, heard about that. Condolences." He seeks Mr. Bob's attention & taps his empty pitcher. The barman bustles.

"It's gonna be a long weird story."

"Already is."

"Longer, then. Weirder."

"Occasionally a song? A drink?"

I nod.

"Now? You want a Guinny?"

"No, Grey. I don't drink alcohol anymore."

"Do I?" he asks, frowning.

"Sure."

"Am I going to stop? Take up crafting tie-dye pouches & puffing opium?"

"No, you ass."

Still frowning he stiffly regards me. "So you're an ex-drinker writing about a bar?"

"Yah, I guess."

He nods.

"What?"

"Til you work out the trouble knotted in that situation, nothing here's going fast anywhere anymore."

He nods, not looking at me, leaves his pitcher unfinished, leaves.

"He's right, Reb."

"He was mad, Ray."

"Mad & right, though. There is a conflict. A knot."

"My dad still drinks. & I *never* did. & Mr. Knickerbocker does."

"The change is me & Cecile is man enough to say it to me."

Dark blue eyes buzzing now with thought. "So what does it mean, now that, um, you don't drink anymore?"

"Well, I'm on the outside looking in."

"Of Luna T's?"

"Of more than that. In my own world too. Alcohol & coffee are the two titans of adult socializing."

She nods.

"Alcohol more so because its houses contain entertainment & sex."

Nods again.

"So I don't know, Reb. But he's right about that knot. Maybe the knot is even the second threshold."

Moving toward immolation, dream leads mind leads body. What matters most is fear-mingled hope. What matters most is to crush it, cut it, know it to be dust, call it illusion, the knot

the knot

a moan & a sigh sum a life end to end, a life, a knot, know it, crush it, cut it, nothing follows nothing, the moan does not beget the sigh, release this thought, the universe is tickless, climb deep enough to observe the flow & the swirl, then climb deeper & observe the—

Rebecca smiles at me & shows me her picture called "Why"

Somewhere Americus strums one just for me, for this moment—

Grey sips & waits—

Just to be holding this ragged sheaf of papers, this bless black pen moving still, 20 years of this story or something resembling this story—

weary, fierce the music everywhere even when I feel—

Rebecca laughs teasing honey onto my lap licking my ear & I broil with life & hope & love—

I have no music to share tonight, not tonight, not yet—claws unloosed, rage in a box with no walls, emptiness thick, I love you, marry me, marry me, & again, & again

“Yes,” she says. “Always.”

A white butterfly means yes. A black carriage means no. A red bonnet for Art. A yellow hate for longing. A pink gown for hunger. A blue suit for embrace.

“You,” she says. “Always.”

We hold hands, transmit music, interior music, open border, infinite smile—always—no matter the—

“Why this War, Rebbby?”

“I think it has to happen. Too many people have been waiting. It’s been coming for a long time, I think”

“Is it the beginning of the end?”

“For some people, it’s *always* the beginning of the end”

“And for us?”

“For us, it’s always the beginning. We’re children no matter our ages, no matter our worries”

“Children?”

“Yes—always beginning—always new—”

“So they will beat us because of this?”

“No—they’ll beat us if we deny it—”

“And so that’s the challenge?”

“Of course—always”

All is grief, so one is told, accept it, bring warm black clothes, expect the rhythms of mourning, grow used to the ways of the world. This world. A world.

All is grief, perhaps. Some nights frigid with loss, fear, loneliness.

Some crackle with laughter. Some tickle into songs.

Her dark blue eyes play me, shout me, croon me. Croon me.

“Rebecca!” Giggle.

“Raymond!” Giggle.

This world remains, & awaits me. Always.

A page at a time. A minute. An idea.

The power still awakes within my pen, still ready to make or maraud—less a pistol
than a bullet—
a bomb—a breach—

the power raised—be wary—

Power raised a rising sheet of water at night's apex—a verity of musics, a clash &
coalescence of myths—

Where now? If the dimensions of possibility are seemingly numberless what to do?
& how? & why?

“Why?” I ask her.
She nods.

“What music to share tonight, Rebecca?”

“All of it” she says—

I nod—

“No other way, Ray” she smiles—watches me scribble for my life—as always—
knows I write to love—write to know—write to live—

“My music has been torrent & tepid for so long”

“But still you try”

“I have no choice”

“No—none of us do”

Americus sits in the bandroom listening to a group of musical young flow into &
away from coherence—knows they worship playing at Luna T's—how it drives them—how
it impedes them—sits at his little table beneath the front window & listens, sips his pint of
Guinness—

Cecile Grey mulls a broken-spined paperback of Aldous Huxley's *Doors of Perception*—sitting in his room at the local YMCA—reads, thinks, taps out a rhythm with his
left hand—chews some cheese slowly, reads:

“That was the problem—to remain undistracted. Undistracted by the memory of
past sins, by imagined pleasure, by the bitter aftertaste of old wrongs and humiliations, by all
the fears and hate and cravings that ordinarily eclipse the light. What those Buddhist monks
did for the dying and the dead, might not the modern psychiatrist do for the insane? Let
there be a voice to assure them, by day and even while they are asleep, that in spite of all the
terror, all the bewilderment and confusion, the ultimate Reality remains unshakeably itself
and is of the same substance as the inner light of even the most cruelly tormented mind.”

What music to share tonight? What colors to eat? What voices to dance? Memories
to burn? Gurus to plunder? Mysteries to worship?

What phreaks to follow tomorrow? What scriptures to crush under boots?

Which love to win anew? Which loyalty to release?

She looks at me all blue eyes so dark, lifting, hers, mine—
 “Just write” she says
 “Just write”
 “Yes—begin there always—begin among your pens & pages—it’s how you do everything else—by beginning there. Here.”
 I nod.
 “Let’s go,” she says. “We have to get along, Raymond.”
 I nod.

A new dream. A bigger dream. No longer a dream at all—per se—
 We leave Luna T’s Cafe—there is briefly a different door—opens into a desert—
 I nod again—there’s the city—the only one on the planet that matters—
 but as important as it is, it merely points to what’s greater—

“You are the most beautiful creature in the universe”
 “You are, too”
 “You are my muse, true love”
 “You are mine”

Rebecca & I face each other—the night is cool calm full moon—

“We make a stand by committing as we do, Reb”
 “Yes”
 “Love the strong & fragile”
 She nods.

We sit facing each other, cross-legged—the city is bright & thumping in the distance—we touch at the knees—begin to dream—eyes awake—enter each other—soak each other’s souls—yes—& carry further along—somewhere, Rebecca, Raymond, neither me nor you—yes—a voyage—yes, no, both, a voyage—

toward us the city’s energies flow—rhythms wavy & slow—a drop, a trickle, a wave—pattern, then no-pattern—

dream—dance—Rebecca, Raymond, much more—Black Rock City—& beyond—before between beyond—

a dance? call it that—call it something—growl, glow, call it new, old, dance? I don’t know—wiggle with the mystery—enjoy—remember, forget, it doesn’t matter, does it? I don’t know—keep trying, or don’t. Keep trying.

The waves continue & lick over us as we sit open-eyed dreaming beneath the full moon & the sky’s royalty of stars—

Voices arrive, one, a few, many,
 a few, hungry & laughing, undulating—

this universe a mist, a light, a shimmer

hunger, laughter, praise everything—
do.

Franny Emily Renee Salinger-Americus joins Rich her husband at his table, settles in his lap, arms around his neck, head against his chest—

“Such a fierce story this is,” she whispers—

“He won’t let up—”

“No—”

“He wants it to be about us again soon—”

“I think it will be—”

“I do too—”

He hugs her tighter. She returns in kind.

Cecile Grey knows where he’s bound, drumsticks in hand, all he can do is keep time
& toss in a few rhythmic explosions when needed—
he hurries—

“Back to Luna T’s or into the City, Rebbby?”

She smiles full moon gorgeous.

For a moment I am roughened patches of oil on her canvas, she is black ink alone
on my lined pages, we disappear into each other’s bursting fancies,
a cry, a moan
yes there is more

dancing, licking, giggling, *resume*—
continue—

O . . . fuck . . . yes . . . look into the tavern’s gloom . . . look toward him, feared,
admired . . . listen

a shaky finger pointing me down—

**“Art thou power, magick, beauty? Art thou hope? Can thou say aught of
thine beginning muchless of thine demise!?”**

standing now—upheld by emotion more than actual gravity & balance

**“Doth thee think thou art blessed with reservoirs bottomless of time?
Doth thee thinkst anything?”**

**“Rise up, pilgrim! Sinner! Maker! Rise, now! Give an hour’s work to each
hour’s life, neither more nor less! Dream with open eyes & busy hands!
Make & show thine makings that others may learn from thine craft &
care!**

“Hesitate little but hurryeth not! Heed well: an hour’s work for each hour’s life. Neither less nor more.”

He sits back down, for just a moment at rest.

I nod, not knowing what else would show honor & agreement both—Rebecca hurries over to him—she listens peculiar, unique to him—& ministers singularly unto his woe—uniquely, where others neither try nor dare—

Loving her but wishing to be alone—a note handed to Mr. Bob:

“Beloved—
I need an hour alone—
All good between us—as ever—
Yours, Ray”

I leave with none a look back—walk out Luna T’s thinking: yes, an hour alone—or ever—I walk out not fully knowing—

To have come this far urges continuing—yet doubts & doubts—

Reckoning Rd gives way to Main Street—a right-hand turn—street crossed & steps climbed:

Cement Park. Ever & on—

I sit & wonder bluntly what matters anymore—

I sit & decide not to leave without some answer—

In my hand a sheaf of nocturnes hurried secretly along w/me—I page through them & read:

“Choose to be clear.”

& I think: yes I wish this—long have I wished this but not known how—

So: how?

Cement Park is as ever & I suppose in a way so am I—the round cement benches from whose center trees grow—taller now than our shared years ago—yes—as am I—

a pen I wield in ways unknown back then—a life come to be unlike any I dreamt—any I was capable of dreaming—

I long for friends, family, yet how often have I run from all these! & why? What blackness, what demons?

My muse presses me on no matter the twists & rebounds of the road: ever she urges me on—

the gone-green Puritan family statue—when I am 3000 miles from here still will I hold an image of it—

years & miles, years & miles—I do not wish to succumb to the might of either—no, I wish to wield the power I have by letting it sing me true—

I ask the Universe: help me.

I pray: let me help myself.

A turn of direction & back to Luna T's where I await myself—where Rebecca awaits her Raymond—

I hurry—

Hurry—& the thickness of this paragraph as it descends word by word line by line down the white sheet-lined blue, hurrying down Reckoning Road, wind & noise, from a tape player? from the skies? she mulls the mirror, what the images tell her, which she chooses to near, listen to, hurry: yes, back, into Luna T's Cafe again & realizing these stories & I are blood-bound for life come what—

yes—hurry—

To she I serve who serves me we serve all serves us none upon knees or lowered eyes but creatures hungry for the buzzing air of live touch, hungry for the raging invisible—

caressing her music, warm, sinewy, because this evergoing silence is cold & dry, not empty, no, not quite that word, nothing is truly empty, not quite

lapping about her curves & colors, what remains after a crescendo wanes

balance & beauty, pain harnessed to look ahead, she brings me hot bread, eyes lick me pleased as I chew, as I *pay attention* to chewing—

meaning & truth, for as long as necessary, til laughter & flight, she is ready for any kind of go I propose, or stay, or writhe

regard her hands & whirl a faith & flame about them, what they may touch, magick, what they may hold, mystery

what are they? nearing, diminishing

**“Thou barketh & barketh & barketh upon thine blank texts
until all seems a howl to divert from their continued emptiness
no matter the strain & savage of thine pen!**

“Thou canst prove there is water, hold up a slopping vessel to each querying eye! Canst thee also prove there is hope? What bloom serves thine metaphor? What hero, what quest? Shall any unending howl succeed thine test & fill thine countless sheets with their first true word?” bellows Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker as he hurls his cane & himself at my scribbling form seated at the bar.

Atop me his breath whiskey-fouled & desperately weary, he speaks anew in sorrowful puffs of words:

“Go, thou. Go. Leave here but a finger or a swatch of skin but go.”

“Where?” I grunt, more interested than I can understand.

“Where the charts & scriptures leave off. What they cannot or do not speak of. What they cannot or do not speak of. Dreams, sand, ocean. Falling space. Thrusting light. A pen writing its man”

I wake up & raise my head from bar to the cries & cheers of the gathered crowd.

“We’re going to the Super Bowl!” he hears different voices chortle. On the TV the New England football Patriots have beaten 24-17 the Pittsburgh Steelers & are bound for Super Bowl XXXVI in New Orleans.

I get hugged & several pints slop my way from sunny drunken souls who don’t know I’ve left behind my taste for alcohol.

No matter: I see Jim Reality & he knows & he smiles & he glints

“May I present humble liquid refreshment offerings to mine lord King Thirst the First?”

“You may” he gleams merrily—

Rebecca returns from seeing Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker to his nap on the couch of the old manager’s office in back.

She sits next to me sometimes hugged jolly by the revelers, her laughter bespeaking her delight—

“We keep going, Reb”

“We come back too. Remember that. It’s important.” I nod honestly.

“He told me to go beyond the charts & scriptures. To where they leave off.”

“Told *us* to go beyond”

“Yes”

“I’m going with you, Ray, wherever & always.”

I nod. Ever & always.

“Never was a choice.”

Something from a book once held, lived: “it was scary to have someone to love, but it was also very fine”—

how complex it has become to serve my Art, my Muse—

how scary, how very fine—
 live among the tatters & glows of my own mind, & here is a painting of a man &
 woman dancing, very fine, & it becomes my emblem, raises my words into broad melodies
 live among others in what resembles right now my native world & here too a muse, a
 wife, a soulmate, arrived to queen that which has always awaited her—
 live among pages & here yet another, yet the same, a girlgodd, an artist, muse,
 delicious, very fine, yes

suddenly, a scene:

Jim Reality's broad figure leads the whooping assemblage onto Reckoning Road,
 "New England Patriots, your 2002 Super Bowl XXXVI Champeens!"

cops dunna get afeared but simple block both ends of the street & blare their
 sirens—

Knickerbocker remains alone in the bar, a Patriots baseball cap askew on his head, a fist
 drunkenly shaking at a God who'd forgotten today to punish New England for her "City
 pon the Hill" arrogance

Godd the Little Pink Bear floats along the merry parade, neither vengeful nor forgetting,
 slightly drunk, singing "We are the Champeens" with the rest of the frosted tramps—

yes, there it is, narrative, & on it could go—sugarhugging, lips damp & giggling—

then wander from there, off the page, out of the notebook, to an else, configuration of
 cloud, dirge, & much-loved toy pup—

No rules. No game. No fear.

More & more, hurry without really ever having moved—

"Hello—I love you—
 won't you tell me your name
 Hello—I love you—
 let me jump in your game!"

cries the jukebox later on at Luna T's Cafe as the crowd rears ever higher—

Suck the world, suck it hard, drink it in, scary, very fine,

Knickerbocker interrupts me, & I agree—cue rant:

**"Drinketh thine world down! Fear, fantasy, fineness of
 distinction between the pilgrim & the sinner! Drinketh! as
 weary artisan his dwelling's nocturnal rest! Drinketh! as the
 woman her baby's suckling need! Drinketh! As woe, darkness,
 & devilry do their cornered human prey!"**

he nods at me & I continue: yes, suck the bastard down, the trees, the vigils, the dull eyes behind gun barrels, the scurrying creatures & departing wings—suck the hard delicious fucker down & grow with every lash of liberation, & preach deeper as humility & silence settle in—

Back to Knickerbocker:

“Bellow & howl thine praise however misbegotten or foolishly placed! Hands will ever hunger for a prayer to conjure, a cheek to stroke! Call it all wicked & laugh furiously or call it all holy & suffer relentlessly. Burn & disintegrate & refuse, finally to account to thine lord for aught a blemish or twig! Be what scriptures warn & wail about! Be unto the heights & depths of grandest majesty & when all trembles & doth indeed fall, remember! Fix up myths & texts of remembrance! Send a message of greatest hope even if it must be cloaked most hidden in words of despair & denial!”

We clink glasses, bourbon to soda, & what drunkards remain yet roused about us raised a weak but sincere cheer—

To go beyond charts & scriptures, beyond where they leave off—question & embrace language—doubt love & doubt doubt—trust, fall, continue—growl & explain—

To know a face newly seen—suddenly connect starlight to fingers to a remembered cry to some dissipating wish—

Carry one’s cup of thirst high—fingers trembling, fingers true—

To remember everything—o yes remember it all—but what she sees—here, now—what she sees cannot be remembered, known, heard—what do you see, Rebecca, that I cannot ask, do not ask?

I don’t remember what you see—nor do I know for what I’m asking—yet this missing thing cornered, even a moment, even to throw a thumb toward its absence, is some looking toward all—

I want to remember what you see—to jimmy a crack in my rust—what scurries beneath, riddles beyond?

I want to remember what you see now & snap time’s lingual grip—

possible to remember in colors or rhythms unclad in words, in consciousness?

Remember what you see now, what’s missing, or seems to be—

beyond charts, beyond scriptures—

& yet know that remembering is not enough, bares a toothy lie about it, a presumption that what's to come's already been seen, been tried, been done—

a tenet of the old, scratched into their dust, & if no other hunger they still bear the one to deny a novel beam anywhere, to build a world stoutly around this denial, yes, this one lastly go if at all—

the novel barks at us in the night, strange melodies bleeding unnamed colors—

the novel rarely arrives at noon bowing to the frumpery of the day's fattest king—
nay, it seeps in, crawls in, a strange, a note, a glint at a time—

arrives, arrived, been here all along—proof before the theory's been written out—

Ever you must pose for me, your muse, your artist, ever you run along my blood,
heat & hurry it, ever what I know of novel I learn from you, what you make me make—ever
pose for me—

your muse, my artist

my muse, your artist

sympiosis, white butterfly, strawberry ice cream, world-blurring sacraments, cups of smolder,
novel ideas brewed in tea—

“Beyond charts & scriptures”

She nods.

“Aren't we beyond them already?”

She nods again. Smirking.

“Then . . . what?”

We sit at my Rich's our little table neath the front window in Luna T's Cafe's bandroom &
watch Noisy Children rehearse. I hadn't noticed that Rich had summoned his bandmates—

“It was time”

“I'm sorry”

“The world you began keeps going. At some point you weren't needed for that”

“What then?”

Americus glares at me, holding his guitar tightly. “For what we can't imagine. We can
keep living, growing, filling up our world within its borders. But we can't trespass them.”

“Are you sure?”

“I know we can't do it like you can.”

“Beyond chart & scriptures?”

Americus says nothing. Beckah, sitting near where he stands, takes his hand & kisses
it. Smirking anew, says “That's his new phrase, Dad. He's wrestling with it right now.”

Americus smiles at her, his forever daughter. Without looking back at me, returns to
rehearsing.

Amazing when Knickerbocker toddles in helped & hindered both by his cane. Rebecca flies
from her chair to accompany him over to our table. Noisy Children, in a rare moment of
deference, unplugs their instruments & plays acoustic.

She sits the old man down in her chair & hurries off to fetch him his drink.

Knickerbocker stares bluntly at me. & on. & on. “OK. What?” I snap.

He says nothing until Rebecca has set his cup of coffee laced with whiskey before him & gotten herself a chair & sat down. She looks at him adoringly as always.

“When wilt thou at last choose life?” he hisses. I expect more but nothing comes. He sips his drink. Then shakily rises & slowly departs.

Fuck this all. I get up, fetch Rebecca from barroom after she has re-installed the old fuck at his seat & say “We’re going.” I leave; she hurries to follow. Probably smirking & pleased.

Beyond charts & scriptures. I don’t fucking know how.

All I want to do is write. Write & love my wife & try to do good by the world. Fuck all else. Anyway—what else matters?

I take her hand in mine & she smiles within me, nothing between us different now than ever save she now resembles she who in my own world—*back there*—I now rightly call true love—

“Her name is Lisa”

She nods.

“She & you are similar but not the same”

“Equivalent?”

“In relation to me, yes. She is a bit younger, we’re not married yet. Similar is best I can call it. As this world is similar to my own”

“Would she ever come here?”

“I think if she did—” I stop.

“Yes?”

“I don’t know. My meeting her connects to my knowing you, you from my knowing Merry Muse. There are connections I cannot discern yet. I choose the work of accommodating all.”

Rebecca nods. There is nothing around us save the barroom entrance to Luna T’s Cafe behind us, nothing else yet—

“There’s more”

“OK”

“For me to write this story meaningfully again I have to take it seriously again”

“You don’t”

“I don’t care any less but I can’t say that I care more—or I can say that I’m beginning to but slowly. Beyond charts & scriptures—it’s already been beyond for a long time—”

“And?”

“And the sense of—more than urgency—*necessity* is better—has recurred less often—til recently”

“And?”

Now I smirk. “I missed it—I finally felt its lack for a long enough time to awaken—to remember—I don’t know—here I am—that’s all” I smile & am smiled.

We remain vaguely located awhile longer—there is a rosiness to where we are—rosy pinkness perhaps—swirls vaporous & damp about us—Rebecca in my arms & my true love is whom I feel—they are similar yes but more so—to love one is to love the other—leaves of one tree?—berries? flowers? shadows? sunlight?

to hold her hand is to hold hers as well—
I do not know what this means—

Beyond charts & scriptures with the muse/wife who companions & haunts me in every world I travel, a girl, a goddess, an artist, daughter of a man I more discovered than contrived over 20 years ago

She is light, she is music, she is stone
Her blood parents lost forever it seems
She bears her beloved father's adoration
& agreed ago to be my wife—

She looks at me curious & smirking, always more confident of me than I am of late—

“Let it happen. Be here now. Be Here Now. Be Here NOW.”

I climb within her heart & settle in with my pen & notebook & into the book called *Why?* I write: “There can be no lasting bliss in this mortal life til nearly everything ever known, ever felt, ever lived, ever chased, ever bitten, ever touched, ever, ever, is gone, til one's cell is the air, one's scripture the bees, til one brushes with sun's light moon's light candle's light, til one's body reserves just a little golden moisture, til memory is nonsense, dreams bunk, play obvious, polity fool, all truth & future apparent in a lick, a fallen leaf, a snapping breeze—”

I stop.

She's gone. Did I hear her say “goodbye”? I don't know.
She's gone, rumbling within me. “Let it be. Await.”
& gone. Silence. Let it be. Await.
I disappear too but not very long.

Let it be. Await. What is immutable phalanx, ka-tet, twined now always, sugar & water, my pen moves with difficulty, slowly, but indeed it moves, await, let it be, make Art for world to come, speak directly & know that these words do go:

I love you, my wife & muse & forever
love, toward you ever I careen,
for you my pen staggers on, with you
my heart ever resides, I love
you, muse, wife, glory, goddess, tonight
I near you, as ever, & we ever
create our own world, our coming world.

She has disappeared within me as I approach her, days left now, mere days, til the cataclysmic moment, the timeless immolation of touch on touch, breath in breath, what cannot be named once but an infinite times

All my worlds will come together at this moment of faith exploding, new life joined, & Rebecca will not return before then, she will return with the explosion—

“Barkeep”
 “Yes?”
 “What’s wrong with him in the corner? He’s writing something & moaning. He OK?”
 “He will be. Another?”
 “Sure, thanks.”
 “This one’s gratis.”
 “Why?”
 “So we can toast him being OK”
 “Ahh”
 “Cheers, bud”
 “Cheers, barkeep”

The raw confession these stories have always been will become rawer still in the coming days. I don’t care if they’re read or understood, if they survive me—

I am nearing my profoundest moment yet of being—April 2, 2002 at the Greyhound bus station in Portland, Oregon. Meeting my true love, wife, muse, twin flame

I can tell no other story til that moment—I can only tell of going there & what happens—

fixtion is for now truth unpretied—the pen is steady & hopeful—my heart is true—my Art is devoted to her—

What comes next few days each hour a surprise, a hunger, a star briefly mortal & grounded before passing on—

Months, & this page stayed blank. Now, & continue. The mingling of my lives until a gridlock, pen mute, sheets thirsty—

Now, & movement—

“Rebecca”
 “Raymond”
 “You can hear me?”
 “Yes”
 “Where are you?”
 “Here, with you”
 “I feel you, & don’t”
 “Yes”
 “I’ve not lost you?”
 “No. Nor her!”

“I haven’t been able to go until now”
 “I know”
 “Do you resent her?”
 “She’s no threat to me. You & I go on no matter what.”
 “Yes, we do”
 “Yes. We do”
 “Where are you?”
 “I’m here”

Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker rears up & listen choiceless

“What lord we doth possess hath not an ethereal face but a hued & contoured one! What lord we doth possess rings variously in our souls as the voice of a beloved child, the great green of a powerful oak, fruit shared with one who sees within our laughter & anguish! What lord we doth possess sprawls gorgeously across a thousand remembered night skies, rolls in thunderously toward a hundred separate shores, dances miraculously, weightlessly among numberless caressing dreams! What lord we doth possess knows no constant nor exclusive home in any tome no matter its croaking bulging-eyed disciples! Heed not he who would answer thine heartstruck query with a citation rather than weep & crawl beside you along your long hours among woe! What lord we doth possess stands bone & muscle, strand & sinew alongside each creature enflamed with animation, likewise rising nearly to freedom, likewise sinking nigh unto extinguishment! When confronted with alleged representatives of alleged manifestations of the divine, frown plainly thy heart’s doubt, challenge bluntly the gathering of submissive samely faces!

“Saloon-keeper! Tis with ill humor that I cast my gaze down to my vessel’s unhappy dregs!”

On a bus passing swiftly through nowhere, carrying muse-wishes & wife-longings, writhing yet cracks in my formerly unbroken sweep of sadness—

This world I carry with me, a fierce thing between many covers—& I wonder how to learn not to learn, how to release without hurry nor expectation, how to cuddle hope within my palms that it may form & reform without my press & prejudice—

“Rebecca!”
 “I’m here! She is too”

"I'm scared. I'm on a bus riding thousands of miles toward a home I have not claimed yet."

"Yes. You're brave. You're hopeful when it's hardest."

"What's to come no more than shadows. Yet I dug this notebook out. I have to try."

"Nobody gets you, Ray. Even *she* doesn't totally. She doesn't know what it's like to dog a dream high & low. She lets fantasies loose where her life thins. What you are she cannot fully imagine. You are the most dangerous & wonderful person in her life & don't deny this, nothing else makes sense."

"I won't deny it. But what good will it do if she doesn't act?"

"She will, in her time. Not just from love, but from admiration, even envy. She wants you to be proud of her but she also wants to be like you. She truly admires few & none as she does you."

"So what do I do?"

"You do what you will & let her curiosity do the rest. Knowing you're near will work at her, already is."

"Am I making things worse with my stress?"

"Only for your own peace of mind. The trip yr on says much more. Yr courage however withering speaks loudest. She can't imagine your level of braveness. It arouses her in ways untellable."

"Will she be brave too?"

"Yes. She is readying. It's not easy for her but she's doing it. She senses how little you are leaving in reserve. The time for games is done."

"Will she come to me?"

"Yes but that is not the issue."

It's: how will you handle it?

Will you prove stronger than last time?"

Americus turns to Jim Reality next to him at the bar. "Remember when Soulard used to write in sentences?"

Reality smiles, soft with sentiment. "The old days" he murmurs.

Americus sips hard at his pint. Jim is right to glow with remembrance. But what of now? Is there one?

"Rebecca"

"Raymond"

"It's going to get more lonely, isn't it? This continental trek . . ."

"Then after that it will get crazier with questions. Let it happen. No way out but through."

"You got to go through it to get to it."

"Exactly. You've uprooted a withering home to replant it in a far, greener clime. Here you are traveling it there. Home is this bus. For the next several days home is the road. You've never done this before."

"Kerouac & his crowd did. Kept home bases here & there but didn't really settle down."

"You get them better?"

"& Rilke too. Always on the move to the next."

"You're finally doing it like them."

It gets more lonely yes along a day on buses, fractured sleep, tries at connection—

"She loves you, Raymond, very much"

"I'm coming to offer her me. I don't know what or how else"

"She knows. Stop worrying!"

"I can't. I don't know how."

"Raymond she feels what you feel. Like I do. She would absorb your every pain if she could."

"I want her in my arms. I want her to feel me, my love entirely for her."

"Soon. Soon. Soon."

"Thank you"

"Keep on."

"I am trying"

The one-eyed man amused regards Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker.

"All is grief because we must have it so. So I learned this & now I understand. All is grief. Simple, eh?"

"Thine unocular vision, sir, besets thee with a view too unwieldly to be credible. If one believed you openly the river would need not bend, the cradle would need not be checked!"

The one-eyed man laughs delightedly. "My friend! Have wine with me! Here, take some of this good bread!"

Knickerbocker persists with but his mug of bourbon-drenched coffee.

The one-eyed man lights a cigarette, rubs his knuckle against his moustache. "Perhaps a choice, as you imply. Yes, room for thought. Perhaps you don't need to decide tonight. Leave it in doubt, eh? Yes! Good!"

Knickerbocker says nothing awhile. Then he looks at me writing these words. He nods, almost cordially. He approves my struggle it seems.

A life's anguish. An apex. A dream.

Rebecca sits with me quietly.

Her quiet awareness has always
gladdened me.

I summon it up now, wherever, a dusky roar of power to protect she I approach, to fill her with my love & receive hers that we both will believe as hours approach us.

Rebecca looks at me &
smiles, her dark blue eyes great with intelligence

"Raymond, there is more good
reaching for you than you can
imagine. Love remembers. Deep love
needs no continual spark to road."

"Why do I doubt myself, Rebecca?"

She smiles naked at me. "Chasing angels, Raymond."

I nod. She holds me, if only in our joined minds tonight. She holds me for the other who awaits me too.

I haven't found my home yet so
 I keep looking harder & the more
 it eludes me the more it seems
 I am nearing it

I feel all sorts gathered near me kind curious loving—the mystery of the night upon me—
 haven't found my home yet so—touch laces with touch—I keep looking harder—the
 whizzing brush along my heart of prayers offered for me

protect her, Universe, protect them all, loved ones scattered far, as I've been crying &
 limping many have touched me

Rebecca points at the bus window:
 "Don't forget these views—grey skies
 pulling at you—relieve you can't
 accept at least yet—manless fields
 of crop & tilled soil—keep remembering
 contour & color—low, distant horizon"

"No doubts. Say yes."

"Yes."

She looks at me smiling. "Expect the best."

I nod. "Three days on the road among notebooks & strangers."

She says nothing.

"There's more."

"No way out but through, Raymond."

"What to burn down, what to preserve, what to renew."

"Expect the best."

She pats my hands. Love kisses in many ways.

"Rebecca, I've been waiting this day so long. The sun's up, the sky is blue. Simple."

She smiles.

"Five hundred miles left, I don't know exactly. Fate, truth, answers crawling into my
 hands."

She nods. "She'll come. Don't worry."

I look you complete. "Rebecca, you've companioned me this trip. Thank you."

She giggles. Familiarly. "Always."

She giggles again, two days later. "Toldja she'd come."

"She kisses like lips to water."

"She adores you, Raymond. She's going to be with you all the time soon. She can't
 abide waiting much longer."

"I know. So what do I do?"

Rebecca sketches idly, says nothing.

"I wait?"

"Just a little bit. Give her the space she needs. It's less & less now. She's nearly
 ready." Reb fixes me still with dark blue eyes. "You know all this."

"I . . . do"

“You’re not at ease with your newer ways of knowing”

“No”

Rebecca’s sketch deepens; I can’t tell of its form though.

“Why have you been pursuing deeper ways of knowing?”

“For her. To protect her & understand her.”

“Are you usually right?”

“Yeah, right or close.”

“And?”

“And what?”

“You still doubt?”

“Yes. I have to.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know!” we both laugh.

“Now it’s 19 days later & she’s been to Seattle & fled me twice—”

“Yes”

“And?”

“You know more than you did”

“I guess so”

“Again, Ray: what if it’s not over? It isn’t. A few days apart in the bigger picture adds to nothing. She’s gone nowhere. You know that. Why do you feel such stress & anguish?”

“She ran twice!”

“& she’ll run again!”

“How do I even know—”

“You do. You know better than anyone whose advice you seek”

“Reunion & run”

“Yes”

“Why?”

Rebecca looks at me multiply—an endless curving stretch of faces

“Pain—fear—confusion—blah blah blah”

“What can I do?”

“Be your best righteous self—but do it for you & her—”

“Faith til it hurts—til it feels cartoonish”

“& beyond that”

Gretta Black, Noisy Children’s bassist, sips her coffee & snickers at me. “Here we are in my own hometown & look at the glum puss on you.”

Rebecca giggles. I nod.

“& for what? A girl so in love with you she can’t stay or leave too long?”

Now they’re hugging & laughing.

“Thanks.”

“He doesn’t get it? I mean he really has no sense of it?”

“No. You’d think he was the one who’s 18 not 38”

I glower.

Gretta kisses my cheek. “You’ve nothing to worry about. She’s hooked. It’s you but it’s also her. She has not the least idea how to be with you. But she wants to very much.”

“Oh”

Gretta grins. “Yes! Oh! She hasn’t begun to figure you out yet. You’re her deepest obsession. Nothing else really matters to her. She runs thinking maybe she can lessen the whole thing, have some of her former life back, even if it was bad. But it doesn’t work. *It’s not working tonight, right now*, While you sit moping she’s fiercely wanting you. If you only knew.”

“I don’t”

Both women shake their head.

“How long do I have to wait?”

“Not long. You know that”

“Then what?”

“Resist being weak.”

“I don’t know how.”

“Learn. Fast.”

I sit up straight. “Riddle me this, then. How do I defend against the daylight? Nighttime hope laps me up, easily. But come a thrashing sleep’s finish I awake empty & nothing.”

They look at my pen. They look around at the grand-windowed coffeehouse we sit in.

“When she calls you, the only thing on her mind will be: does he still love me? She’ll only believe it or not believe it by your voice, & she’ll need to see you to confirm this. She’ll need your touch, your kiss, your vow, & repeatedly. No less, & of course more.”

“You’re so frankly certain.”

“Of course. We’re part of your greater self, Raymond, who you squirm against no matter how many times proven accurate & real.”

“She’s got ideas of me visiting Portland”

“Yes. Many.”

“As a buddy?”

They break up laughing

“So how do I deal?”

Gretta takes my hand. “By standing up straighter than you have in a long time.”

“Now what? Two weeks pass & suddenly word. She misses me despite her recent nastiness. Is marrying, again claims so, & then he’s off to join the military. *Now what?*”

“Now you do what we advised. You stand straight. Let the dust clear. Wait.”

“Fuck it.”

“No way out but through, Raymond. You know that.”

A choice, as always. Belief in sequence or flow. Dream or polity. Gut or gutter.

“Vanilla or butter pecan” & two girls laughing.

Follow her while she watches you. Sing, listen. Believe. Flex but do not break from the pain.

“She loves you, Raymond. As serious & vital as anything ever in your life, she loves you. This matters. It simply does not end.”

I look from one to the other. “I keep failing to surrender.” They nod. “What next?”

“Reunion”

"Then she runs again?"

"Maybe. Maybe not as hard."

"Why?"

"Your eyes. Face. Your laugh. Your singing. Your unbreakable intensity. Your voice. The terror of your absence."

"Terror"

"She's tried life without you. She can't do it. She dresses for you. She giggles for you. She sings for you."

I sign.

Rebecca grasps & upholds me with her dark blue eyes. "You wanted this girl. You want a love whole & holy. It is happening now. You can have it if you don't give up. This is the crossroads. Believe nothing but her kiss"

What was it you saw? What was it she felt? Laughter. Plummeting.

I love you. Tell me again.

You love me. I keep saying it.

Unroot the inky engines, wrench, wriggle, hurry. I love you what truth this is the civilization launches from. Wrench, wriggle, hurry.

Laughter. Plummeting.

Gretta touches her bass guitar lightly, deepening me, encouraging. Rebecca conjures a pink friend & together they fill the air about me with puffs of magick—

Unrust the inky engines, hold nothing at bay anymore—no reason to save, secure—burn every memory past & hence—a coldly scalding few will remain, lay within—

Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker turns aside his first morning drink of the day—

"Nay, Saloon-keeper! Keep me not dully supped in liquid numbness a moment longer! Nay! I roar!"

He raises his stick toward the ceiling & then swings it about—

"What lord dares reside in these smokey downtrodden environs! What lord challenges for lead hungerer in this world's mass spiritual starvation?"

He slips clumsily off his stool & throws his hat & coat away—

"Must I rend every button & thread from my beskinned bones before any rightly crowned holiness will appear?"

Off his shirt & tie—off his black shoes & dark trousers—he stands garbed only in white boxers covered in red bloody heart—

"We demand a simple answer from thee, o lord! Nay, we thine slaves command it!"

Learn neither to begin nor end. All that was, is. All that is, or ever shall be, is.

I think: can this story still matter? Nearly two years in the writing & not even half-done? Who cares? Why carry this notebook? Why tumble forth another few pages between weeks of silence? Fiction? What does that mean anymore?

Wrench, wriggle. Believe.

“She wrote to me, Rebecca. She misses me. She is deeply unhappy. How can I turn away from her?”

“Don’t.”

“I alone believe. Look at me. Look through my face. She is my muse in this broken world my home.”

“I know.”

“All I can do is love her & sing to her from afar. My Art belongs to her.”

“Yes.”

Dr. Knickerbocker, sits in his bloody hearts boxers on his stool, sipping a mug of water. **“Charles!”** he calls.

Mr. Bob the bartender stumbles over, nonchalantly.

“I’m sorry.” Sad voice.

“For what Arnold?”

“You are man such as I’ve not been in years, if ever.”

“Don’t be foolish. You’re a warrior. I just keep you, er, supped with drink.”

A pink friend settles on the stool next to Dr. Knickerbocker. He picks up this friend & holds it close. Tears.

Wrench. Wriggle. Believe.

She queries. She twists in light. She looks around in time & eternity, dream & touch. She says my name softly when alone, holds it closely to her heart. She smiles. Hears a noise. Turns the other way.

Yes, she thinks, despite all. Yes.

This threshold, what it might be, heavy glass tank, water filled with depths unrevealing, black glass, black water, a shrug each for what when why—these words found & writ again—how longing longs to perpetuate—either coast I sit with black pen—

he sings “How the heart approaches what it yearns . . .” smiles at me—it’s OK, all OK, all will be well & all will be well

she loves me tonight a double hundred miles away—admires, desires, what else I do not know—admires—desires—

push on toward morning. resurrection. the least thought matters. push on. no way out but through—admires, desires—

A new dream. A bigger dream. No longer a dream at all. So I’ve lived these many months. Now learn to fly in this grumbling earthbound turmoil—learning to fly—learning to fly—

“She’s teaching me, I don’t know exactly how.”

“Flying hurts at first. Feels almost unnatural. Awkward, perhaps unlucky & unable.”

Universe, a naked prayer tonight: I long for reunion with my true love, her a double hundred miles away. I belong with her, learning to fly even as I teach her as well. Help me, help us, to better reunion, soon as possible. Help us to enact our love's faith despite impediment. I pray to thee, Universe, for help & guidance & blessing, for strength, for endurance during these struggling times, & for what must be possessed to claim & keep our victory. Thus I pray.

Rebecca looks fierce upon me & says she's not gone fear not she twists as often as ever for the press of your hand look at me

I look

good she says now let your heart swirl around her like ever openly & freely & rawly

there is nothing but love breathe
this simply in & out

love shivers & glows when molded into
Art

Art makes the Universe look
at me, Raymond!

Hello, Lisa Marie

Hello

so you're here on my pages at last

Yes I am

Are you OK?

No but I'm trying now

That's good.

It's going to be slow this time.

I know.

If you love me you will understand.

Yes.

I want you to love me without pain. I want us to be happy.

I wanted you to call me before I left.

I'm sorry I didn't.

What's between us?

You don't have to ask. You already know. I love you. I've never stopped. But I'm not ready. Will you wait for me?

You know I will.

Nobody's ever loved me like you do. They always hurt me. I don't think you will.

No I wont.

Be patient. You have my heart. Nobody will take me away from you again.

I still want you to call.

I know, Raymond.

I don't know what kind of writing this is, Lisa. I called it fixtion like it seeks to fix.

You're still doing that. You're trying to fix me.

I'm going to Burning Man again with you in my heart.

I know. Next year I'll be with you. I promise. I'm going slow. I'm going to get you. I promise with all I have.

I see eyes within eyes within eyes, those of so many beloved people & they begin & end with yours

soul like smoke within me—like aura around me—thus I carry you & emit our love by dance & pen—by the love I give to others what I offer you is greater—

I want to love you without pain, Raymond, please let me learn how, help me, let me go, keep me—

Dr Knickerbocker shouts **By love's flaming thrust are we shaped, do we rise, do we crumble! By love's corrosive stroke do we stumble & crescendo!**

Someone rests her head against my shoulder & watches this page as I fill it with words that begin there can be no lasting bliss in this mortal life til nearly everything ever known is gone, til one's cells is the air, one's scripture the bees

bark for absent master, cry for faraway muse, dream for home's nearing

til one's body reserves just a little golden moisture, til memory is nonsense, dreams bunk, all truth & future apparent in a candle's winking eye

hold sunlight in hand, bounce her like a ball, flick & wiggle til a cloud joking passes

waiting for me to defend this precious yet indefensible existence one says I love you & I will carry you & I will not give up on you & there's more! wait don't go yet!

The desert waits I carry to there my cluster of muse, an unbroken pocket stitched from pain & empty beds

she tickles me briefly & giggles—

& I turn to my shamans the trees & they nod by leaf to my entreaties & prayers. Love: Only love. There is only love. The rest falls away.

You keep sending me butterflies by wind & wheel, each one I love you & I cannot count how many & you know & you smirk & I rarely do & you giggle & you approach music I once thought but now music approaches you—music approaches you—music approaches you—

music approaches you—

approaches you—

music approaches you—

approaches you—

you – you – you – you – you –

Gretta looks at Rebecca—they nod—closer, I guess—

Rebecca sits in my lap, I think it's Rebecca—two giggles the same—they know it—they/she know it—

Dr. Knickerbocker glares at me: **“Serve thine muse! No less! Protect & sing! Thou has't no other path! Thine instrument smoting, serve!”** Sips lightly from an unlabelled pint bottle.

I look at him you said go beyond charts & scriptures **yes** he replies I'm trying he said **try deeper** he growls do you know how hard this is? I say **no** he replies they are the same now Rebecca & Lisa I groan **they always were** he says advise me I beg **keep saying I love you keep singing** he says I look at him he grimaces at me is that all? **yes that's all—keep saying I love you keep singing**

I nod he sips—

I feel you dream of death, I feel you dream of me, all is vulnerable sweetness & jackal alike, my touch in these lately silent days has tossed torrent toward you, protecting you loving you dreaming you, at moments becoming limbs of light shifting heatedly among your limbs of light, you awaken still dead, still dreaming of me, thus hope, remembering a kiss to come, remembering time a great fake of loops in empty space, I'm crying, I'm crying, all that is pulses, thinking: all that is pulses, thinking: all that is pulses thinking ALL THAT IS PULSES we hidden in the leaves proclaim the truth of need, of beauty, of pain, of mystery, truth & no-truth

She looks at me quietly, now smiling bites my shoulder lightly by way of—

She dances slowly around me in a music fool with love

We travel nearer each other something that fingers twist among fingers feels like yes—

I watched a couple dancing around each other earlier, humming, there were drums & mountains nearby,

thud thud watching thud thud

thud thud beating thud thud

thud thud beauty thud beauty thud

thud thud

Tides & artillery—we watch the beams crisscross our floors & think: foul & think: perfection. Our meaning is a raw lash of beauty against a pressing hide of control

mmmmmm drums & mountains drool incandescence nocturnal breathing all is vulnerable. I found that collecting hours of belief in love enhanced—

she sits quietly writing me new with pen some hundreds miles away & I sat writing her those in between received—

Looks at me: “Waiting”

Looks at me: “Mine”

Looks at me: “Truth”

Conjures & makes.

Dance of dreaming, dance of death, the news today is that there is no news—

dust accumulates—
 Dream of dancing dream of death we near each other to finish joining
 finish joining
 finish joining?

Something furious with its own existence loosed every night to roam the soft corridors looking for a way out, pretzel of words fashioned as a key, panicked blood tainted with powerful aboriginal symbols, so close, seems so close to carrying a full heart of unsubdued love into the daylight. So close.

Peyote. New-washed cherries. Beams riddle the sky bright faceless coins lasers & fires & blowing up gases & breasts reckon dust devils & pages turn to fire to begin better lives—

You cry out. I settle you with fuzzy music flung to you by way of moonlight, conjuration, & helplessness—

Neath the grope, between the beams, within the currents, what tis? Are all doors open, some? what tis? Deep in the night I regard a woman singing softly, loosed of her pain, then later deeper more helplessly deep in the night I lie twisted wondering at this turn & that—some other day I jump up & down in a public restroom with frustration, what tis? what tis?

Rebecca looks at me says desist or pursue. Nods. Either will hurt, yes.

Day flakes away from glint to rose to onyx the wind within lifts & falls me: she dreams reinvention of the world: help her: I try: the miles slick past: help her: I try: All is maya: Perhaps: Dream Illusion Art Play: Help her: I try: rose petals & butterfly wings: Help her!: I try: I love you: Touch me anew beyond my dreams: Help me: Try.

What burns in you is beauty, what burns in me is you. All alone, all suffering, yes. I feel it. Your soft empty hands. Your eyes misdirecting your watchers. Your buzz in my chest saying why & when & soon.

The persistent & samely shaped stains in things: beauty burns in all creation, bright & painful. You sip water, smile, say a word, watch the sun come & go. You think, once, twice. You suffer & I call this my world.

A nymph. A maiden. A muse. A goddess. Marry me & finally bury your grief in my heart. First & last flower of the world, marry me. Plunge your grief within me, deliver it within coldest steel. I will rock you to dreaming.

All is grief so one grieves, revives crushed heart each new day until colors vibrate with endless struggle, until music wilds loosely within, beastly pagan roaring music bite me for all those who've bitten you, near me with no words & stare, our love become a magick smoking from a thousand miles of flaming woods. I have nothing left so I can heal you better. I have nothing left plunge your hunger for death into my chest I will receive it gladly I will crush it gladly I will save you gladly there is nothing to my world but the sounds of your songs to come. Love shatters the world every day with a faith bullets & buildings & treatises can neither annihilate nor elude.

I have nothing left. I love you. I do not wish to disappear along the path home. Bark bark regard the clear untouched sky. Bark bark sing to the darkling heroes they will snicker sing greater. Bark Bark become the gift sought, the light the language the love. My love you are missing days now what world notices? I do. Both vast & mere I know & wonder, ache beneath & about your aches. I notice. I know.

Always a choice: safety or symbiosis. Quiet upon these cement steps I choiceless choose symbiosis. I freely love you & thus the world. You approached my music from unknown far within: here you are: still: I notice: I wait. I suffer. OK.

Still, all that is, flows. Still, sugar & willows, many musics, evermore. Still, I love you. Mate in joy & grief, my pages moan to you. Marry me. Envelop my world forever.

Everything ends, & a beat, & all begins again. I have nothing & carry on. I have nothing. I love you.

Dusk accumulates as a bus awaits its moment to run. Nothing between us lessens, my love, my light, my Lisa Marie. Fixtion fierces into confession. All begins again.

No modesty in my pen neither spikes jutting toward pain.

The bus moves, nothing's lost, my love, not ever, I kneel my life before you & wait.

Bark bark dream awake!
 Bark bark heed the tides!
 Bark bark pray the moon!
 Bark bark Art the savior!
 Bark bark kiss & believe!
 Bark bark our hands will touch again.



To be continued in Cenacle | 60 | December 2006



Dr. Timothy Leary



Using LSD to Imprint the Tibetan-Buddhist Experience

A Guide to Successful Psychedelic Experience

http://deoxy.org/L_impgui.htm

1. *Planning a Session*
2. *Preparation*
3. *Some Practical Recommendations*
4. *The Setting*
5. *The Psychedelic Guide*
6. *The Period of Ego Loss or Non-Game Ecstasy*

Having read this preparatory manual one can immediately recognize symptoms and experiences that might otherwise be terrifying, only because of lack of understanding. Recognition is the key word. Recognizing and locating the level of consciousness. This guidebook may also be used to avoid paranoid trips or to regain transcendence if it has been lost. If the experience starts with light, peace, mystic unity, understanding, and continues along this path, then there is no need to remember the manual or have it reread to you. Like a road map, consult it only when lost, or when you wish to change course.

Planning a Session

What is the goal? Classic Hinduism suggests four possibilities:

1. *Increased personal power, intellectual understanding, sharpened insight into self and culture, improvement of life situation, accelerated learning, professional growth.*
2. *Duty, help of others, providing care, rehabilitation, rebirth for fellow men.*
3. *Fun, sensuous enjoyment, esthetic pleasure, interpersonal closeness, pure experience.*
4. *Transcendence, liberation from ego and space-time limits; attainment of mystical union.*

The manual's primary emphasis on the last goal does not preclude other goals—in fact, it guarantees their attainment because illumination requires that the person be able to step out beyond problems of personality, role, and professional status. The initiate can decide beforehand to devote their psychedelic experience to any of the four goals.

In the extroverted transcendent experience, the self is ecstatically fused with external objects (e.g., flowers, other people). In the introverted state, the self is ecstatically fused with internal life processes (lights, energy waves, bodily events, biological forms, etc.). Either state may be negative rather than positive, depending on the voyager's set and setting. For the extroverted mystic experience, one would bring to the session candles, pictures, books, incense, music, or recorded passages to guide the awareness in the desired direction. An

introverted experience requires eliminating all stimulation: no light, no sound, no smell, no movement.

The mode of communication with other participants should also be agreed on beforehand, to avoid misinterpretations during the heightened sensitivity of ego transcendence.

If several people are having a session together, they should at least be aware of each other's goals. Unexpected or undesired manipulations can easily "trap" the other voyagers into paranoid delusions.

Preparation

Psychedelic chemicals are not drugs in the usual sense of the word. There is no specific somatic or psychological reaction. The better the preparation, the more ecstatic and revelatory the session. In initial sessions with unprepared persons, set and setting—particularly the actions of others—are most important. Long-range set refers to personal history, enduring personality, the kind of person you are. Your fears, desires, conflicts, guilts, secret passions, determine how you interpret and manage any psychedelic session. Perhaps more important are the reflex mechanisms, defenses, protective maneuvers, typically employed when dealing with anxiety. Flexibility, basic trust, philosophic faith, human openness, courage, interpersonal warmth, creativity, allow for fun and easy learning. Rigidity, desire to control, distrust, cynicism, narrowness, cowardice, coldness, make any new situation threatening. Most important is insight. The person who has some understanding of his own machinery, who can recognize when he is not functioning as he would wish, is better able to adapt to any challenge—even the sudden collapse of his ego.

Immediate set refers to expectations about the session itself. People naturally tend to impose personal and social perspectives on any new situation. For example, some ill-prepared subjects unconsciously impose a medical model on the experience. They look for symptoms, interpret each new sensation in terms of sickness/health, and, if anxiety develops, demand tranquilizers. Occasionally, ill-planned sessions end in the subject demanding to see a doctor.

Rebellion against convention may motivate some people who take the drug. The naïve idea of doing something "far out" or vaguely naughty can cloud the experience.

LSD offers vast possibilities of accelerated learning and scientific-scholarly research, but for initial sessions, intellectual reactions can become traps. "Turn your mind off" is the best advice for novitiates. After you have learned how to move your consciousness around—into ego loss and back, at will—then intellectual exercises can be incorporated into the psychedelic experience. The objective is to free you from your verbal mind for as long as possible.

Religious expectations invite the same advice. Again, the subject in early sessions is best advised to float with the stream, stay "up" as long as possible, and postpone theological interpretations.

Recreational and esthetic expectations are natural. The psychedelic experience provides ecstatic moments that dwarf any personal or cultural game. Pure sensation can capture awareness. Interpersonal intimacy reaches Himalayan heights. Esthetic delights—musical, artistic, botanical, natural—are raised to the millionth power. But ego-game reactions—"I am having this ecstasy. How lucky I am!"—can prevent the subject from reaching pure ego loss.



Emmanuelle Brochier

Some Practical Recommendations

The subject should set aside at least three days: a day before the experience, the session day, and a follow-up day. This scheduling guarantees a reduction in external pressure and a more sober commitment. Talking to others who have taken the voyage is excellent preparation, although the hallucinatory quality of all descriptions should be recognized. Observing a session is another valuable preliminary.

Reading books about mystical experience and of others' experiences is another possibility (Aldous Huxley, Alan Watts, and Gordon Wasson have written powerful accounts). Meditation is probably the best preparation. Those who have spent time in a solitary attempt to manage the mind, to eliminate thought and reach higher stages of concentration, are the best candidates for a psychedelic session. When the ego loss occurs, they recognize the process as an eagerly awaited end.

The Setting

First and most important, provide a setting removed from one's usual interpersonal games, and as free as possible from unforeseen distractions and intrusions. The voyager should make sure that he will not be disturbed; visitors or a phone call will often jar him into hallucinatory activity. Trust in the surroundings and privacy are necessary.

The day after the session should be set aside to let the experience run its natural course and allow time for reflection and meditation. A too-hasty return to game involvements will blur the clarity and reduce the potential for learning. It is very useful for a group to stay together after the session to share and exchange experiences.

Many people are more comfortable in the evening, and consequently their experiences are deeper and richer. The person should choose the time of day that seems right. Later, he may wish to experience the difference between night and day sessions. Similarly, gardens, beaches, forests, and open country have specific influences that one may or may not wish. The essential thing is to feel as comfortable as possible, whether in one's living room or under the night sky. Familiar surroundings may help one feel confident in hallucinatory periods. If the session is held indoors, music, lighting, the availability of food and drink, should be considered beforehand. Most people report no hunger during the height of the experience, then later on prefer simple ancient foods like bread, cheese, wine, and fresh fruit. The senses are wide open, and the taste and smell of a fresh orange are unforgettable.

In group sessions, people usually will not feel like walking or moving very much for long periods, and either beds or mattresses should be provided. One suggestion is to place the heads of the beds together to form a star pattern. Perhaps one may want to place a few beds together and keep one or two some distance apart for anyone who wishes to remain aside for some time. The availability of an extra room is desirable for someone who wishes to be in seclusion.

The Psychedelic Guide

With the cognitive mind suspended, the subject is in a heightened state of suggestibility. For initial sessions, the guide possesses enormous power to move consciousness with the slightest gesture or reaction.

The key here is the guide's ability to turn off his own ego and social games, power needs, and fears—to be there, relaxed, solid, accepting, secure, to sense all and do nothing except let the subject know his wise presence.

A psychedelic session lasts up to twelve hours and produces moments of intense, intense, INTENSE reactivity. The guide must never be bored, talkative, intellectualizing. He must remain calm during long periods of swirling mindlessness. He is the ground control, always there to receive messages and queries from high-flying aircraft, ready to help negotiate their course and reach their destination. The guide does not impose his own games on the voyager. Pilots who have their own flight plan, their own goals, are reassured to know that an expert is down there, available for help. But if ground control is harboring his own motives, manipulating the plane towards selfish goals, the bond of security and confidence crumbles.

To administer psychedelics without personal experience is unethical and dangerous. Our studies concluded that almost every negative LSD reaction has been caused by the guide's fear, which augmented the transient fear of the subject. When the guide acts to protect himself, he communicates his concern. If momentary discomfort or confusion happens, others present should not be sympathetic or show alarm but stay calm and restrain their "helping games." In particular, the "doctor" role should be avoided.

The guide must remain passively sensitive and intuitively relaxed for several hours—a difficult assignment for most Westerners. The most certain way to maintain a state of alert quietism, poised in ready flexibility, is for the guide to take a low dose of the psychedelic with the subject. Routine procedure is to have one trained person participating in the experience, and one staff member present without psychedelic aid. The knowledge that one experienced guide is "up" and keeping the subject company is of inestimable value: the security of a trained pilot flying at your wingtip; the scuba diver's security in the presence of an expert companion.

The less experienced subject will more likely impose hallucinations. The guide, likely to be in a state of mindless, blissful flow, is then pulled into the subject's hallucinatory field and may have difficulty orienting himself. There are no familiar fixed landmarks, no place to put your foot, no solid concept upon which to base your thinking. All is flux. Decisive action by the subject can structure the guide's flow if he has taken a heavy dose.

The psychedelic guide is literally a neurological liberator, who provides illumination, who frees men from their lifelong internal bondage. To be present at the moment of awakening, to share the ecstatic revelation when the voyager discovers the wonder and awe of the divine life-process, far outstrips earthly game ambitions. Awe and gratitude—rather than pride—are the rewards of this new profession.

The Period of Ego Loss or Non-Game Ecstasy

Success implies very unusual preparation in consciousness expansion, as well as much calm, compassionate game playing (good karma) on the part of the participant. If the participant can see and grasp the idea of the empty mind as soon as the guide reveals it—that is to say, if he has the power to die consciously—and, at the supreme moment of quitting the ego, can recognize the ecstasy that will dawn upon him and become one with it, then all bonds of illusion are broken asunder immediately: the dreamer is awakened into reality simultaneously with the mighty achievement of recognition.

It is best if the guru from whom the participant received guiding instructions is present. But if the guru cannot be present, then another expert. But if the guru cannot be

present, then another experienced person, or a person the participant trusts, should be available to read this manual without imposing any of his own games. Thereby the participant will be put in mind of what he had previously heard of the experience.

Liberation is the nervous system devoid of mental-conceptual redundancy. The mind in its conditioned state, limited to words and ego games, is continuously in thought-formation activity. The nervous system in a state of quiescence, alert, awake but not active, is comparable to what Buddhists call the highest state of dhyana (deep meditation). The conscious recognition of the Clear Light induces an ecstatic condition of consciousness such as saints and mystics of the West have called illumination.

The first sign is the glimpsing of the “Clear Light of Reality, the infallible mind of the pure mystic state”—an awareness of energy transformations with no imposition of mental categories.

The duration of this state varies, depending on the individual’s experience, security, trust, preparation, and the surroundings. In those who have a little practical experience of the tranquil state of non-game awareness, this state can last from 30 minutes to several hours. Realization of what mystics call the “Ultimate Truth” is possible, provided that the person has made sufficient preparation beforehand. Otherwise he cannot benefit now, and must wander into lower and lower conditions of hallucinations until he drops back to routine reality.

It is important to remember that the consciousness-expansion is the reverse of the birth process, the ego-loss experience being a temporary ending of game life, a passing from one state of consciousness into another. Just as an infant must wake up and learn from experience the nature of this world, so a person must wake up in this new brilliant world of consciousness expansion and become familiar with its own peculiar conditions.

In those heavily dependent on ego games, who dread giving up control, the illuminated state endures only for a split second. In some, it lasts as long as the time taken for eating a meal. If the subject is prepared to diagnose the symptoms of ego-loss, he needs no outside help at this point. The person about to give up his ego should be able to recognize the Clear Light. If the person fails to recognize the onset of ego-loss, he may complain of strange bodily symptoms that show he has not reached a liberated state:

1. *Bodily pressure*
2. *Clammy coldness followed by feverish heat*
3. *Body disintegrating or blown to atoms*
4. *Pressure on head and ears*
5. *Tingling in extremities*
6. *Feelings of body melting or flowing like wax*
7. *Nausea*
8. *Trembling or shaking, beginning in pelvic region and spreading up torso.*

The guide or friend should explain that the symptoms indicate the onset of ego-loss. These physical reactions are signs heralding transcendence: avoid treating them as symptoms of illness. The subject should hail stomach messages as a sign that consciousness is moving around in the body. Experience the sensation fully, and let consciousness flow on to the next phase. It is usually more natural to let the subject’s attention move from the stomach and concentrate on breathing and heartbeat. If this does not free him from nausea, the guide should move the consciousness to external events—music, walking in the garden, etc. As a last resort, heave.

The physical symptoms of ego-loss, recognized and understood, should result in peaceful attainment of illumination. The simile of a needle balanced and set rolling on a

thread is used by the lamas to elucidate this condition. So long as the needle retains its balance, it remains on the thread. Eventually, however, the pull of the ego or external stimulation affects it, and it falls. In the realm of the Clear Light, similarly, a person in the ego-transcendent state momentarily enjoys a condition of perfect equilibrium and oneness. Unfamiliar with such an ecstatic non-ego state, the average consciousness lacks the power to function in it. Thoughts of personality, individualized being, dualism, prevent the realization of nirvana (the “blowing out of the flame” of fear or selfishness). When the voyager is clearly in a profound ego-transcendent ecstasy, the wise guide remains silent.



Burning Man 2006

Notes on Contributors

Ric Amante lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. His poetry last appeared *The Cenacle* | 58 | June 2006. Few words describe the pleasure in featuring his poems again in recent issues. What Ric brings to these pages is the art & life of one who has named his demons, learned to live with them or overcome them, and through it all kept singing true like the birds he so loves & admires.

Nemo Boko lives in Eugene, Oregon. He grew up in Miami, Florida, and studied politics, religion and East Asian studies in college. A visionary experience had while living in Boulder, Colorado, set him on the path of art where he began to reintegrate his political aim of diplomacy with his aesthetic love of tribal and magickal images. His aesthetic vision can be found online at <http://www.nemo.org>.

Emmanuelle Brochier lives in Eugene, Oregon. An abstract expressionist artist, originally from Lens, France, she met Nemo Boko and eventually wed him and moved to the United States. Kassi and I were lucky enough to travel to Eugene one recent weekend and visit with her and Nemo. Their house is full of their art, full of their ferment, full of her smart, dandy laugh.

George Dorn lives under cover in Seattle, Washington. He has tasted the edges of some greater Weirdness, and finds himself to be simultaneously thrilled and confused by life. He can be found haunting the cafes of Seattle, or appearing out of nowhere with his video camera and a crazed look in his eye. Fnord.

Judih Haggai lives at Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel. Her poetry last appeared *The Cenacle* | 58 | June 2006. There was a night recently when I came home from the world's withering troubles so gone of hope, run in with fear, wishing something fucking good would happen for everyone, everywhere. My yawp that night went to Jude, who has for years now listened to me, and pined for the same thing.

Dr. Timothy Leary was born in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1920. Dr. Leary was a controversial figure throughout his life, advocating the use of LSD and other psychedelic sacraments, and tirelessly working for a worldwide expansion and elevation of consciousness, one the world still awaits. Dr. Leary died in Los Angeles, California, in 1996. His words were last featured in these pages in *The Cenacle* | 54 | April 2005.

Carson McCullers was born Lula Carson Smith in Columbus, Georgia in 1917. She published weird and wonderful novels and short stories until her death in New York in 1967. Scriptor Press originally reprinted this issue's story as Burning Man Books | 48 | 2006. She once told a critic: "Writing, for me, is a search for God."

Kassandra Soulard lives in Seattle, Washington where she attends college and tries to live like the world is better than it sometimes appears to be. One night we were walking in the city, crossing a heavily-trafficked street corner, and a blindly speeding, cellphone-distracted driver almost hit her. This issue before you would not exist if my grabbing hand and the Universe had not intervened. Thank you, Universe . . .

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Seattle, Washington, a city at the edge of the Empire, but it may be that very soon there will be no more Empire, just a nation-state, like many others, looking again to occupy a sane place at the world's table of nation-states, and maybe one day there will be no more nation-states and one hand reaching toward you in kindness will be as much kin as any other . . .

